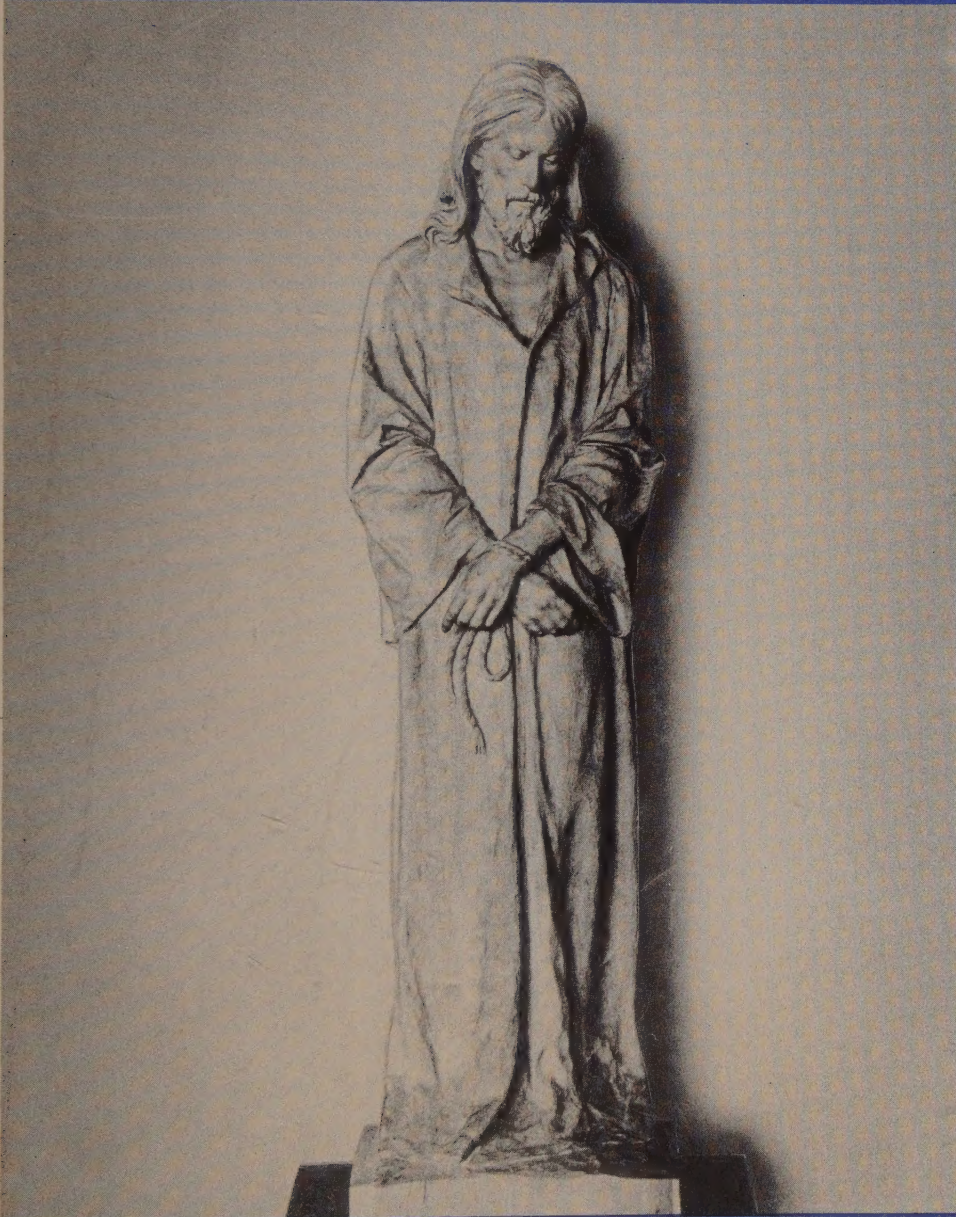


APRIL-JUNE 1952

Crossroads

SUCCESSOR TO THE WESTMINSTER ADULT BIBLE CLASS



A Study and Program Magazine for Adults

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A STUDY AND PROGRAM MAGAZINE FOR ADULTS

April 1, for
April—June, 1952

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The Peace of God in Christ Jesus

By Anders Nygren

"The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:7.

THE peace of God is a boundless thing which does not suffer itself to be caught in our small thoughts and tiny categories. So, when it is said that God's peace surpasses all understanding, that means that when we seek to express by our understandings and our thoughts that which God's peace is and implies, we shall always fall far short. All too often this passage has been interpreted as though it meant that God's peace lies hidden so deeply in the Christian's heart that even he himself is usually unconscious of its presence, and that therefore the Christian is far richer in peace than he himself can understand. The apostle, however, is speaking here of something utterly different. He is speaking of peace itself, and he is saying that peace is a thing so great, so high, so overpowering, so divine, that it passes all understanding. Even if we draw upon all our powers, and all the resources of the understanding, as we ought to do, even so, we shall learn that God's peace is greater and deeper than our thoughts about it, and that we shall never in any way be able to get to the bottom of it. Rather, we shall ever fall short of comprehending it.

At the same time there are two different ways of falling short. The one is fatal; the other is salutary.

The first way of falling short occurs when we begin with our own thoughts, and do not go beyond our own conceptions of what the peace of God signifies. For then we mislead ourselves, away from the truth, fail to get at the real issue, and even misunderstand the reality which is involved in it. Just as little as anything else which pertains to God can be measured by human standards, so little can God's peace be handled thus without its being deformed and dissipated.

The second, the salutary way of falling short, occurs when we allow ourselves to be led by God's revelation in the Scriptures, and regulate our thoughts according to its meaning. In the Scriptures much is said about the peace of God which has been given to us in Christ Jesus. But, when we penetrate deeply into it, and seek to fathom its significance, we come to learn ever anew that this reality which God gives "surpasses all understanding." It is altogether too great, in its unfathomable richness and depth, for us to capture within our thoughts and conceptions.

About Bishop Nygren

Anders Nygren, Bishop of Lund in Sweden, is one of the outstanding world churchmen and Bible scholars of our day. A few years ago he was head of the Lutheran World Federation, and he has represented his Church at nearly all the World Church movements of the past twenty-five years. He has written several major theological works, among which are: *Agape and Eros*, a study of the Christian doctrine of love, and a commentary on Romans.

The following article is the first chapter of a smaller and more intimate volume, *The Gospel of God*, published by The Westminster Press last October. This book was his "pastoral letter," addressed to his diocese when he was made Bishop of Lund. It is shared with CROSSROADS readers because it gives us some thoughtful and stimulating insights into a familiar verse of Scripture. The book is translated from the Swedish by L. J. Trinterud.

All Bible quotations in the article have been translated from the modern Swedish translation used by Bishop Nygren.

WHEN the subject of God's peace is brought up for consideration, it is easy for us to interpret it in accordance with what we otherwise know in ordinary human associations under the name "peace." We often use the word "peace" as a designation for a certain subjective state of mind. Peace is the opposite of anxiety and restlessness. It is a state of mind characterized by quiet and exalted repose. This definition of peace, taken over from everyday human life, is then applied to the peace of God. Thus, by "God's peace" would be meant that quiet and harmonious state of mind in which that person finds himself who has his fortress in God. But, even if there may be some truth in such a description of God's peace, we may not rest content with it. By such hu-

man analogies we shall never reach to the essentials of the matter. These are but human ways of thinking which either lead us astray or allow us to rest in superficialities.

If we are to catch sight of the true significance of God's peace and penetrate deeper down into its mystery, we must forgo our own speculations and simply listen to what God's Word has to say to us concerning it. Then we shall soon discover that God's peace looms up in a wholly different significance, and with wholly different dimensions, from what we had supposed. Now it is not merely a matter of an inward subjective state of mind, a feeling of harmony and quiet, but something infinitely greater. God's peace is an objective fact, a mighty reality, which embraces our entire existence. God's peace is that existence-form in which our lives as Christians, in all their totality, are set. We like to imagine that peace is a delicate thing, which we must lock up within ourselves, and protect, and hide in the depths of our hearts, so that it may not be lost or be evaporated. But in the Scriptures peace is spoken of in an utterly different way. There it is said that God's peace is a mighty power, which of itself can keep our hearts and our thoughts. God's peace is a mighty fortress, in which we are well defended and safe against all hostile powers of destruction. It is not we who are to protect peace, but rather it is peace which is to protect us.

If we have gotten our eyes well fixed on this greater perspective, and have come to realize that peace is a power, a divine *dynamis*, then we begin also to understand why the Lord Jesus, when he sent out his disciples, put the greeting of peace upon their lips. When they were commissioned to give the greeting of peace, it was not to be merely a powerless wish that they were to express. Rather, by their Lord's commission, they were to impart a gift of the utmost reality. Peace is a gift of Christ. It is conveyed through his disciples to that one who receives the greeting of peace. Henceforth, then, it may be said of him that "peace rests upon him." But, continued Jesus, if this gift of peace is rejected, "so shall it return back upon yourselves" (*Luke 10: 6*). Note the preposition "upon" which is used here, when it is said that peace "rests upon him." This has something to say to us about the significance of peace. Just as God's wrath is a power which from above, from heaven, comes down and like a terrible reality rests upon lost humanity (*Rom. 1: 18*), so also is God's peace a power which in and through Christ comes down to us from above, and like a blessed reality rests upon redeemed humanity.

THIS leads us then a stage farther. If the greeting of peace was to be the disciples' first word, it might seem that it was to be followed up by the proclamation of the essentials of the gospel. That, however, would be an utter misunderstanding of the facts. The proclamation of God's peace is not merely a beginning, or an introductory word, but it is just

in itself the true and proper gospel-proclamation. Jesus has sent his disciples to preach God's peace in his name, that and nothing else. In so far as that takes place, their commission is fulfilled.

The entire content of the gospel is plumbed in the word of God's peace, because the entire content of the gospel is Jesus Christ. To preach him and to proclaim God's peace are one and the same. For it is he who has brought us God's peace. He is in his person and in his work so identical with God's peace, given to us, that the apostle, in *Eph. 2: 14*, can say outright, "He is our peace." Christ himself is our peace. Therefore, the gospel concerning him is also called "the gospel of peace" (*ch. 6: 15*).

Seen from one aspect, all of Christ's work and mission is gathered up in this passage, "He is our peace." It was for this purpose that he came—that he should bring God's peace to a lost humanity. Even in the times of the Old Covenant it was known that this was to be his mission. Therefore, he was called in prophecy, "The prince of peace" (*Isa. 9: 6*).

IN AGREEMENT with this also, our Saviour's life from beginning to end was fixed upon that one objective—namely, to bring God's peace to us. This appears clearly in those decisive periods in his life as man, as well as in his suffering and death, and in his resurrection. At the Saviour's birth the tidings of "peace on earth" rang out. Therewith was the interpretation of his incarnation given. For that meant that God's peace had come down to earth with him, and that through him it now rests upon us. And the same is true of his suffering and death. Why did he choose the way of degradation, suffering, and the cross? The answer is, "Punishment was laid upon him, that we might have peace" (*Isa. 53: 5*). And, finally, the same is true of his resurrection. There also peace stands at the center. When the risen Lord revealed himself to his disciples, time after time he summed up his message to them in the words, "Peace be with you" (*John 20: 19, 21, 26*). God's peace and Christ's resurrection belong inseparably to one another, for in the resurrection of Christ that new creation, which is characterized by God's peace, burst forth. So also the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews connects these two together when he says that it was the "God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus" (*Heb. 13: 20*).

A clear picture of what God's peace means in the Christian life is given to us by the apostle Paul in the fifth to the eighth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. Earlier in the letter he has described, first, what human life is like now that it stands under God's wrath, and, secondly, how God through Christ revealed his righteousness, and how he gives that righteousness to each and every one who through faith belongs to Christ. It is this gift which Paul calls justification by faith. What then is the fruit of this God's

(Continued on page 10)

popular book and film has been *One God—the Ways We Worship Him*. But is its underlying principle acceptable to Protestant Christianity? A father asked himself that question after his eight-year-old son saw the film at school. He concluded that it was not acceptable. In this article he tells why.

Do We All Believe in ONE GOD?

By Richard C. Palmer

YESTERDAY our third-grader saw a motion picture at school. Judging from his reactions, the statements of reviewers, and the uncritical acceptance of its point of view by many of those who have seen the film, it is an excellent motion picture both from the standpoint of technical quality and the effectiveness of presentation. The film that our child saw is entitled *One God—the Ways We Worship Him*.

The central purpose of those who show this film is very commendable. For example, most public schools that use the picture do so for the purpose of promoting understanding between the different groups that are represented in the school district. Also, many church groups have used the film in an attempt to help both children and adults understand dissimilar religious groups. Few of us would object to this purpose.

The unfortunate thing about using the film *One God—the Ways We Worship Him* for this purpose is that the film is used uncritically. The subject matter is presented in such a manner that most of those seeing the film accept the conclusions of the title without question. A close examination of the film and its title, however, cannot help but bring us to the conclusion that this picture is not simply teaching friendly understanding, but that it is making common belief the basis of understanding.

The entire theme of this film is based on the conclusion that all men worship the same supreme being. However, from this basic conclusion the deduction is made that the only differences between religions are differences in modes of worship and in the form by which men express a common belief. No attempt is made, in an uncritical showing of this film, to demonstrate that the differences of belief about God are fundamental and radical differences, and no amount of tolerance and good will can ever reconcile them. Each religion is absolute in its idea of God, and each would say that the other is wrong on basic matters.

The makers of this film selected the three dominant religious groups of America as the subjects of their presentation: Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity. Unfortunately, the film implies, through the inclusion of Unitarian worship, that all

groups which are neither Roman Catholic nor Jewish are Protestant. Unitarianism is much closer to liberal Judaism than it is to Protestant Christianity. Presumably, if Islam or Confucianism were strong in America, the film would have included them in the orbit of common worship of the "One God," for limiting the scope of presentation does not limit the implications of the film. If it can be demonstrated that Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity are but different forms of the same basic faith—that they all worship the same God—it can then be demonstrated that all other religions also worship this same One God. Moreover, the limitation of the presentation to these three groups furnishes the added advantage of presenting three groups that are very closely related, so that the observer is less critical of the total implications. The film also gains an advantage in its presentation because of the tensions that are apparent between the three groups. Its commendable desire is to seek out paths of understanding and co-operation. But the implication is that the dominant source of antagonism and discord is a difference in religious belief and practice, and that once this difference is resolved, the tensions and conflicts between the groups will be eliminated. In other words, when Jew, Protestant, and Roman Catholic are brought to the belief that they really all worship the same God, the tensions between the three groups will disappear.

These two assumptions of the film are questionable. Let us see why.

Does Religion Unify the American People?

Although many of the tensions of present-day life may be traced to basic religious differences, it can scarcely be proved that the acceptance of a common religion will automatically end the conflict. The First World War was fought almost entirely between nations that were supposedly Christian. In the United States serious tensions exist between Negro and white Christians, of both Roman Catholic and Protestant persuasions.

Moreover, it has never been assumed that the solidarity of the American people is dependent upon a unity of religious belief, or even upon an acceptance of every man's belief as being equally valid. The unity of the American people arises largely out of a tolerant

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recognition of diversity. It has been an accepted principle that a man shall be permitted to hold as true that which he desires to hold as true, even though he may be in complete error. This principle has been held with the belief that there are rights and wrongs, truth and error, but that if truth and error are permitted to dwell together in a free interchange of ideas, truth will eventually triumph over error. The long history of the United States as a republic with a remarkable freedom of expression is sufficient proof that this is a valid basis for peacefully dwelling together. We would not discount the fact that there are areas of serious tension and upheaval, but we do claim that these areas of disruption are not the norm of American life. Certainly, we may say that unity of belief is not the basis of community life in the United States. Therefore, we conclude that this film falls short in its purpose of teaching neighborliness, because it fails to realize that in diversity of faith rather than in unity lies the real strength of America.

The most serious failing of this film is to be found in its theological implications. That is that all men worship one God, and that particularly the Jew, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant, all worship the same God, and that they differ only in their modes of worship. It may be true of those who produced the film, and it is undoubtedly true of practically all who show the film, that they have no idea of teaching theology. Nevertheless, whether consciously or uncon-

sciously, the film teaches a positive and far-reaching theology, the implications of which are dangerous.

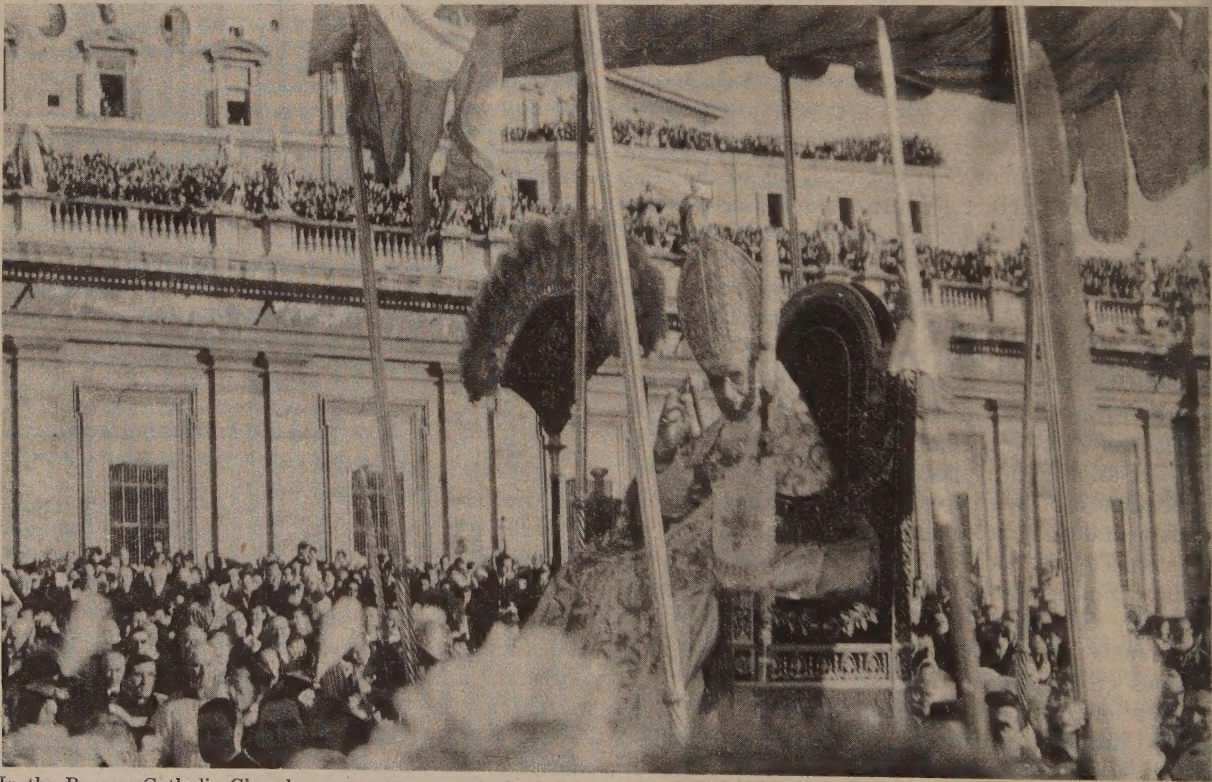
The first theological implication of the film is that three extremely different religious groups have no basic theological differences. All of them, so the film teaches, worship and believe in the same One God. Is this true? Let us briefly examine the common beliefs of these three groups and then consider their fundamental and irreconcilable differences.

Judaism and Christianity

Judaism is the parent of both Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity. The divergence of both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism from Judaism is derived from the Person of Jesus Christ. The manifest disparity between parent and child does not negate the fact of the Jewish parentage of Christianity. It is because of this parentage that Judaism shares so much in common with the Christian faiths.

The richest common treasure between Judaism and Christianity is the belief in monotheism. Christianity and Judaism hold that God revealed himself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and fulfilled his promises to them, preserving their descendants as a nation in order that all might see a witness to the one true God.

Judaism and Christianity share the Old Testament Scriptures. In them, both find the assurance of God's purpose and plan for man. They form a common record of God's search for man in order that he might save



In the Roman Catholic Church men may approach God only through the ministry of the Church, as exemplified in the priest or the saints. . . . Pope Pius XII, head of the Roman Church, blesses the crowd on the way to proclaim the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

man from his own sin. From the Old Testament both Christian and Jew have received the magnificent preaching of the prophets, and the encouraging and soul-warming hymns of the psalmists.

In Judaism the Protestant finds evidence of the priesthood of all believers and God's personal relationship to man. The Roman Catholic finds in Judaism a partial basis for the continuance of a sacrificial system and for an authoritative priesthood.

What Protestants Share with Roman Catholics

In addition to what they share with Judaism, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism have in common the New Testament Scriptures, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and, above all, a professed belief in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour. The great saints of the Christian era, up to the time of the bursting forth of the Reformation, are the common heritage of both. Protestants, together with Roman Catholics, have a rich heritage in the work of Augustine, Savonarola, Thomas à Kempis, Francis of Assisi, Patrick of Ireland, and others who toiled relentlessly for the faithful and pure proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The forms of worship of Protestantism derive from the development of worship under Roman Catholicism. In fact, worship in several of the Protestant groups varies from Roman Catholic worship only in the use of language and in beliefs concerning the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

With this great stock of belief in common, it is easy to see how an uncritical and undiscerning person might easily confuse the issue and presume that Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity differ only in their modes of worship. But there are fundamental and irreconcilable differences between these three religious groups.

How We Differ from Judaism

Judaism worships a God who in its concept of his nature is different from the Christian God. The central faith of Christendom is that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, our divine Lord and only Saviour. Christian Churches and organizations that are faithful to God's revelation of himself bar from their fellowship those who reject this basic belief. The member Churches of the National Council of Churches and of the World Council of Churches are united together because of their acceptance of this basic faith. Judaism rejects this belief in Jesus Christ. Orthodox Judaism rejects Jesus completely, whereas the conservative and liberal Jews sometimes class him as a prophet or as a rabbi. In all of its groups, however, Judaism rejects the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Because of its belief in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour, the Christian Church accepts the teaching of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Spirit the Christian Church finds the One who is seeking men and enabling them to come to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins.

A frank recognition of the differences that exist among us are not to be interpreted as intolerance of Roman Catholics and Jews. We endeavor to live with them in love and understanding, and the film, *One God—the Ways We Worship Him*, helps us to do that. At the same time, we believe that the Protestant interpretation of the Christian faith ought to be clearly understood and stanchly held by those of us who are in this household of faith. To that end we have examined this film in this article and have concluded that there should be a careful study of its implications wherever it is used.—G. L. H.

As a consequence of its acceptance of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and because of its acceptance of Jesus Christ's teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church holds what is known as the Trinitarian doctrine of the Godhead. This doctrine may be stated simply as follows: there is one God, one perfect being; in this one perfect being are comprehended three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and these three are One. Judaism rejects this doctrine of God and maintains that the Christian Church is really based upon a tri-theism rather than a monotheism.

Judaism worships a God who created the heavens and the earth, and who made man and all things in and upon the earth. This God, however, has not spoken or revealed himself to man by coming to the earth as a man. This God called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this God brought the people out of the land of Egypt and has maintained them as an ethnic and cultural group through all the ages since as a witness to the world of God's governance of the earth. The duty of man to this God is to believe in him and to serve him by the observance of laws and precepts and by the performance of good works.

Judaism rejects the Christian belief in the mediating and atoning work of Christ. Judaism rejects the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit. Judaism rejects the Christian belief in God the Holy Trinity. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that Judaism and Christianity do not worship the same kind of God.

Protestantism and the Faith of Rome

There is a less discernible difference between the Roman Catholic conception of God and the Protestant faith in God. Here it is much easier for the superficial observer to leap to the conclusion that the two groups differ only in their manners of worship, for both Protestant and Roman Catholic profess to believe in the same Trinitarian doctrine. As has been previously noted, both Protestants and Catholics accept the creedal statements of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Upon closer examination, however, we see that a wide gulf separates the two groups. The difference between the God whom the Roman Catholics worship and the God whom Protestants worship is discerned in what each faith teaches about the revelation of God.

Protestants believe that God has revealed himself to man through the Holy Scriptures and through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ as that act of sacrifice for our sins is revealed in the Scriptures. It is this belief in God's revelation of himself to man through the ministry of the Holy Scriptures that is a basic characteristic of Protestant belief. The Protestant faith asserts that the Holy Scriptures are the Old and New Testaments. They hold "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be . . . the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

Protestants believe in a divine Christ who, as a part of the Holy Trinity, gave himself for our salvation. In other words, they believe that God himself provided for our salvation. Protestants believe that man can perform no good work which will earn him salvation; there is no merit in the works of men. Such good works as men do, so Protestant Christianity believes, are done because of the movement of God's Spirit upon men.

Protestants believe that God, through Jesus Christ, has sent the Holy Spirit to lead men to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and to give men effectual faith in order that they may know their sins forgiven. Because of this belief in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Protestants believe that God is continually seeking his children directly. Protestants believe that through Jesus Christ they may directly approach God and have full communion and fellowship with him and the assurance through faith that the guilt of their sins has been blotted out.

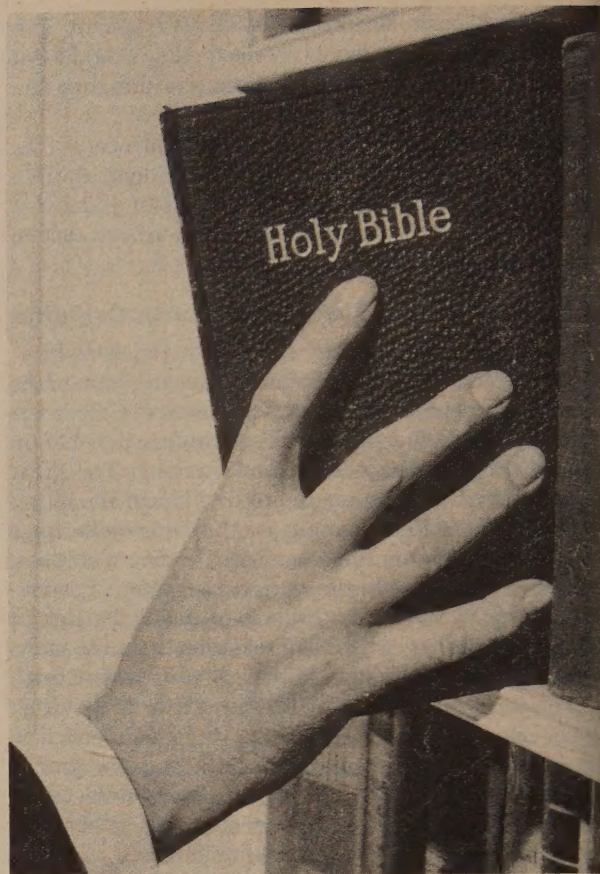
The Roman Catholic Church accepts a belief in the Trinity. The Roman Catholic does not believe, however, in a God who has so directly and fully revealed himself to man.

The Roman Catholic Church does not accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the complete inspired revelation of God. It is their belief that the Scriptures are subject to the interpretations of the Church through the popes and through Church councils. They believe in a God who has given an earthly organization complete control over his revelation. The individual Roman Catholic must believe what the Church believes or else be counted as apostate.

The Roman Catholic Church does not worship a God who is freely accessible to all men. Man may approach God only through the ministry of the Church, as exemplified in the priest or the saints. The Roman Catholic Church denies that man may come to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins through direct communion with God, but asserts that man may only receive forgiveness through the ministrations of the Church.

The Roman Catholic Church does not believe in a God who has freely provided salvation for all men, but in a God who requires that man must, in part, earn his own salvation through the medium of his own good works.

It is plain to be seen, therefore, that the Protestant



THE PROTESTANT'S AUTHORITY
IS THE WORD OF GOD

and the Roman Catholic do not worship the same concept of God. The Protestant worships a God who is always accessible. The Roman Catholic worships a God whose inaccessibility is a part of his personality. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism differ from each other in more than simply the manners in which they worship.

We must therefore conclude that the theological basis of the film *One God—the Ways We Worship Him* is without foundation, because the differences between Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity are much more radical than simply the ways of worship. Moreover, the differences in belief concerning the God of the three faiths are irreconcilable, for they are mutually exclusive of each other.

For the Protestant the implications are clear. We must not permit the uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of this film. The uncritical acceptance of the statement of this film is an open attack upon the integrity of Protestant faith in "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; and in his Holy Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth." It is an attack upon our acceptance of God's revelation of himself through the Holy Scriptures. It is an attack upon our belief in God and his Word that "the just shall live by faith."

"When the Bridegroom Cometh"

Matthew 25: 1-13

SINCE God is Lord over time, the Christian faith embraces the vast sweep of time from beginning to end, from Creation to Consummation, from Genesis to Revelation. The parable of the Ten Virgins deals with the future horizon: "the end of the world." It should be read in connection with the whole of *Matt., chs. 24; 25*, the discourse on "the last things."

The local color of the parable is derived from the procedure of an Oriental wedding. The story implies that, contrary to Western experience, the groom often kept the bride waiting. At an unpredictable moment he and his companions would arrive at the bride's house in order to escort her and her maids in a gay lamplit procession to his house, where the wedding would take place. In this instance, he delayed so long that the bridesmaids, leaving their lamps burning, fell asleep. At midnight came the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," whereupon the virgins rose to trim their lamps, only to discover that the oil needed replenishing. The sequel indicates that the central point of the parable is that *readiness for the unpredictable hour* is the trait that marks the distinction between the wise and the foolish.

The parable refers to the Second Coming of Christ. Elsewhere in the New Testament our Lord is described as the heavenly bridegroom (*II Cor. 11: 2; Eph. 5: 25; Rev. 19: 7*). Although we should expect some reference to the Bride (the Church), apparently the virgins represent the Church, which, in the present age, is composed of both faithful and faithless individuals, that is, "wise" and "foolish." No standard is given by which to distinguish who the faithful are, for the elect are known only to God, and the separation will be made at the end. (See *Matt. 25: 31-46*.) Jesus refused to answer the question as to who would be saved, except to say that one should "strive to enter in at the strait gate" in the hope that he would not be among those to whom the door would be shut.

The key to the parable is, *the bridegroom tarried*. The delay in the Second Coming occasioned consternation in some circles, as we know from *II Peter*. It is important to recognize, however, that the center of gravity in the Christian faith has always been the victory that God *has* accomplished in Christ, not the victory that lies beyond the horizon of the future. As Oscar Cullmann observes, the decisive battle in a war may occur at a relatively early stage in the conflict, even though the war continues; so, likewise, Christians believed that the decisive battle had already been won in the career of Christ, even though the conflict continued for an undetermined period. The Christian lives in the interval between God's "once-for-all" victory in Christ and the final divine victory which is expressed in the imaginative language of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

Negatively, then, the parable emphasizes that no one knows or can know when the Bridegroom will come, that is, when the whole historical drama will be summed up in God's purpose revealed in Christ. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (*Matt. 24: 36*.) Positively, it teaches that the tarrying of the Bridegroom should be the occasion for faithfulness, alertness, responsibility, repentance. The present has an "eternal dimension," for it is set within the interval of the memory of what God has done and the anticipation of what he will do. The climactic word of the parable is "watch," "be alert."

The meaning of keeping the lamp burning may be interpreted by another saying found in *ch. 5: 16*: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Christian faith is not a passive waiting for God's triumph at the end. Rather, it is active witness for Christ. It is "faith working through love," as Paul said. It is a missionary impulse that carries the "good news" to the ends of the earth. "This gospel

of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (*Ch. 24: 14*.) Apocalyptic sects that calculate the time of the Second Coming and preach that Christians should sell their goods and wait for the great event plainly ignore the Scriptural teaching, first, that no man can know the day and the hour of God's final triumph and, secondly, that the assurance of Christ's victory is primarily a summons to social action and missionary responsibility in the present.

This parable of the Kingdom of God stresses what is sometimes called the "otherworldly" dimension of the Christian faith. Since God's Kingdom lies on the other side of the future horizon, its coming can be described only in the language of religious imagination. Christianity differs from secular faiths like Communism or scientific humanism, which assume that the goal of history can be achieved in history through revolution or scientific planning. The Kingdom of God lies at the end of history and is God's Kingdom—not man's. This has profound relevance in our day, when some are driven to cynicism or despair by the realization that we are living at the end of an era and perhaps, if man continues in his hell-bent folly, near the end of civilization. The Christian walks by faith in him who is Lord over time—past, present, and future. Already God has asserted his Lordship over history in Jesus Christ, and from this faith springs "the ultimate hope" in the final victory of the Son of Man. This hope, however, is primarily a perpetual summons to keep the light of the Christian witness burning brightly, with the confidence that the actions of today will be brought to fulfillment by God at a time that lies in his keeping.

—BERNHARD W. ANDERSON

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*We've heard enough about why people imbibe,
but have you ever wondered*

Why Some People *Don't* Drink

By John Park Lee

THIRTY-FIVE million adults in the United States do not drink. They are in the minority, for some 65,000,000 men and women do drink—rarely, occasionally, or regularly. These are the figures given by those in a position to know.

Many studies have been made and numerous articles have been published exploring the reasons why the 65,000,000 use alcoholic beverages, and the explanations are almost as numerous as the drinkers. It might prove enlightening for a change to study how the 35,000,000 nondrinkers "got that way," to learn why they have deliberately chosen the less popular alternative. The reasons must be compelling; for most of us do not, except under genuine conviction or compulsion, break with the dominant social custom.

Too frequently the advocates of total abstinence have advanced only one argument to support their cause—the argument based on the tragic results of abuse of alcohol. That this is impressive cannot be doubted; for no person, whether or not he is a drinker, holds a brief for drunkenness. Coupled with the warning that continued use of alcohol may produce chronic inebriety has been the denunciation of all drinkers—occasional, moderate, and heavy. Drinking is condemned as a sin.

We must recognize that this moralistic argument simply does not appeal to the average drinker, who has difficulty in believing that his casual and occasional drink foreshadows chronic drunkenness. He rejects politely but firmly the suggestion that he is a sinner because he drinks.

But there are other reasons that lead men to choose total abstinence voluntarily, and these are to be cited as valuable weapons in the armory of those who would seek to persuade others to eliminate alcohol completely from their lives.

Eight basic reasons for abstinence might be listed, as follows:

1. Moral conviction.
2. Local custom.
3. Type of work.
4. Dislike.
5. Limited finances.
6. Previous trouble with alcohol.
7. Social responsibility.
8. Life's increasing demands.

1. The first of these, moral conviction, has inspired most of the advocates of abstinence. Reared in homes where drinking was outlawed as immoral, trained in churches that have reinforced these home prohibitions, such persons are convinced that the use of even slight amounts of alcohol is sinful.

Having made this decision as a matter of conscience, these people simply cannot understand how others can differ from them. They are often openly skeptical of the sincerity of other individuals and churches that do not accept their definition of sin as valid.

It should be noted that all churches believe drunkenness to be a sin. Both public custom and law punish the drunkard for this offense. But custom and tradition alike accept moderate drinking in our culture; and until the majority of the people of our country change their minds, it should be frankly faced that the moral argument will not weigh too heavily with most people.

2. The second reason for abstinence—local custom—demonstrates the point made above. Where the majority of the people in a community are abstainers and believe in abstinence as the best way to live, their influence brings many who have no moral convictions about drinking to conform. Custom, it should be noted, is an influence that can work either way.

3. Many men and women shun drink because of their type of work. Their employer (the railroads, for ex-

ample) may make drinking a cause for immediate dismissal. Others engaged in precision work or in fields that demand very clear judgment voluntarily eschew alcohol so that they can work better.

4. Some people do not like the taste of alcohol and do not drink for the same reason that they avoid certain foods. No moral issue is involved; the taste buds are.

5. Inflation is on the "side of the angels." Alcoholic beverages cost so much today that many are unable on their slender incomes to afford them; hence, they abstain for economic reasons.

6. Previous trouble with alcohol accounts for many abstainers. The child of drunken parents frequently has such a revulsion to alcohol that he cannot stand even the smell. (But, strangely enough, some children of drunken parents may also drink themselves and even become drunkards.) Some men don't drink because of doctors' orders. Still others have had tragic experiences with alcohol—an arrest for drunken driving, a lost job. They quit to prevent a recurrence of the tragedy. Some have become alcoholic and learn that their only hope for normal life depends on total abstinence.

This latter group must be careful when advocating abstinence for others, lest their opponents cry "sour grapes" or compare them with the fox in Aesop's fable that lost his tail and tried to persuade all the other foxes to join him in his unbeautiful state.

7. Some people who can drink without getting into trouble stop because they see what harm it does to others. Observing the tragedies produced by alcohol, they feel that they have an

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HAPPY WITHOUT HANGOVER

These Presbyterian young adults are among the thirty-five million adult nondrinkers in the United States who find happiness in wholesome recreation and Christian fellowship.

obligation to society to abstain, lest their drinking lead others to follow suit. Other people make their abstinence a matter of moral conviction, believing that they should not drink not only for their own sake but also for the sake of others.

All the above reasons are obviously valid for those who have been led by them into a life of total abstinence. But they cannot all be employed for the persuasion of others because they hang on highly individual situations that are not universal, or even general.

8. A most influential argument stems from life's increased demands. Every day the requirements of life add thousands of men to stop drinking, voluntarily and without any dramatics or tragic overtones. People produce and eliminate their drinking as they grow older. More men drink in their twenties than at any other age; but as they get older, the number of drinkers both numerically and proportionately declines. Why?

One reason is that many men find alcohol, though not perhaps actually interfering with their lives, is definitely a limiting factor. As they assume more responsibilities, as their work becomes more complex, as more people become dependent upon them, they start eliminating everything that does not add to their feeling of stability, security, happiness, and alertness. They begin to sense that alcohol slows them up a bit, makes them less

alert, makes their judgments suspect, consumes valuable time, is an occasional cause of embarrassment. Looking at their work and their life at home and away from home, they decide to drop drinking for the same reasons that lead many of them to give up the more violent physical activities of their youth and cut out trivial social engagements.

Alcohol Seems to Stimulate

These decisions rest on a sound scientific basis. Alcohol, the pathologists and psychologists and psychiatrists tell us today, is a depressant, not a stimulant as we once thought. It seems to be a stimulant because of the warm glow it produces, the feeling of relief from fatigue, the temporary release from worry and anxiety, the way it makes a party "go," the general sensation of well-being. Unfortunately, although these effects are quite real and have apparent value to the one experiencing them, they are illusory and have been accomplished because alcohol dulls and deadens the senses. It slows reactions, anesthetizes those parts of the brain that record feeling or anxiety, and lulls to sleep one's critical faculties.

Alcohol does not banish the poisons of fatigue from the system in order to help a person recover from his tiredness. It merely makes the tired man "feel" less tired. Alcohol does not relieve the cause of pain. It merely puts

to sleep those nerves which are reporting the pain to the brain. Alcohol does not solve the problems that produce worry and anxiety. It merely defers attention and thus often aids in enlarging the problem because of the delay in attacking it.

Alcohol does not clarify judgment or even stimulate action. It actually dulls the critical senses to a point where a man carefully considering all the facets involved in a decision may dismiss the dangerous features as unimportant and rush to a reckless conclusion.

Does Drinking Aid Creative Work?

Alcohol does not make better work possible. It actually slows reaction time. Scientific tests have demonstrated beyond argument that any type of work is slowed and made less accurate by even slight amounts of alcohol. Yet because of the depressing effects of alcohol on critical judgment, a person who has had a drink thinks he is working better, easier, and more accurately.

Studies have even been made of the relation of alcohol to creative work such as the arts. The tradition is that writers, artists, sculptors, musicians, and poets are able to work only under the "stimulating" effects of alcohol. The evidence is not entirely conclusive. It may be that in rare instances where emotional blocks or other psy-

chic limitations stifle the creative impulse in sobriety, alcohol may so depress these inhibitions as to permit free flow of the creative talent. But from most creative artists comes repeated testimony that their work is so demanding that it often requires rigid adherence to a strict routine. It demands heightened rather than deadened senses.

If It Really Did Stimulate . . .

If alcohol were a stimulant, more widespread use as a means of increasing efficiency might be expected. We should expect to see coaches giving their sprinters a drink before the starting gun, or dosing their players between the halves or innings. We would expect the chairman of the board of a big corporation to down a few drinks before presenting a vital matter to his directors. (This does happen at times, not to stimulate but to overcome the individual's fear of inadequacy.)

We would insist that the surgeon take a few drinks before beginning to operate on us, or that our locomotive engineer keep a bottle in his cab to stimulate his performance at the throttle, or that the airplane pilot and copilot hoist a few before the take-off.

Most of us have realized that alcohol depresses and dulls human faculties, but have accepted unthinkingly the concept of alcohol as a stimulant. When we begin to put it in the class of other depressants or sedatives, a great deal of its charm begins to disappear.

We would scoff at a hostess who offered her dinner guests sleeping pills, and would reject violently an offer of barbiturates from a luncheon host. Yet, in effect, the hostess who serves drinks before dinner is giving her guests a mild sedative. If stimulants are needed, the pharmacopoeia lists many. Why not use them? But men, intelligent men, shy away from such drugs and are scornful of those who employ them.

What we actually seek is not stimulation but relaxation. Instead of learning good and healthy methods of finding release from tension, many employ alcohol, which does provide temporary ease.

The Habit

We recognize the dangers in becoming dependent upon any drug for health or happiness. Physicians have difficulty in persuading many patients

to take mild sedatives because the patients do not want to become "addicted" to their use. Yet millions of men are daily using alcohol as a sedative without recognizing their growing dependence upon the daily drink for rest and relaxation.

Also unfortunate is the general acceptance of alcohol as essential to a dinner, a party, or other social gathering. Hostesses fear that the guests will not mingle easily or have a good time unless barriers are broken down by alcohol. They overlook the conclusion that dependence upon alcohol to make a party a success reflects severe limitations on the wit, charm, and hospitality of the host and hostess. We like to think our friends come to see us because they enjoy our company. We shall never know if we always entertain them with alcohol.

Alcohol is not essential to life. It is not needed as a food or beverage. It is not essential to any line of work. It is not necessary for social life or domestic happiness. It is very definitely an accretion to, not an integral part of, normal living.

To those who wonder why 35,000,000 men and women don't drink, we might suggest that although varying reasons have led us to this way of life, all of us have found that without it we lack nothing significant. Rather, we have discovered that our abilities to enjoy and appreciate the values of life have been sharpened, our discriminations have been refined, our physical well-being sustained, and our opportunities to meet life's greatest challenges enlarged.

The Peace of God in Christ Jesus

(Continued from page 2)

act of justifying us? The answer is given to us by the apostle in his fourth chapter. Like a summary title over the whole stand the words, "Therefore, now that we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom. 5: 1*). It would take too long to go through these chapters and show what they have to say about the new life in Christ and the peace of God which characterizes that life. It must be sufficient to point out but one noteworthy item. Just as the "title" above this section closes with the words, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," so also each and every one of these chapters closes,

one might almost say like a stereotype, with nearly the same words, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (*chs. 5 and 7*), "in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*chs. 6 and 8*). Why this repetition? Why this stereotyped, recurring final note? Frequently the attempt has been made to conceive it as a sort of formalized concluding phrase which seeks less to give expression to any actual content than it does to give to the whole presentation a certain liturgical stateliness. Nothing could be more incorrect. There is in reality a very positive interest which leads the apostle to close each of these chapters with the same words. When Paul says "in Christ Jesus," this is for him never merely a formula. In these words lie hidden the whole mystery of the Christian life. All that we as Christians have, we have solely and entirely "in Christ Jesus." "He is our peace." Without him we should not have any peace of God. Without him we would yet stand continually under the wrath of God. But now God has come to us in Christ Jesus and has given us his love, his righteousness, his peace. In Christ God has revealed and demonstrated to us that he has thoughts of peace and not destruction, in order to give to us a future and a hope (*Jer. 29: 11*).

Jesus said to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you; I do not give unto you as the world gives" (*John 14: 27*). That peace of God which we have in Christ Jesus has nothing in common with that which in the world goes under the name of peace. In the world the old aeon holds sway. In the Kingdom of Christ God's peace holds sway. In the world distress dominates but Christ has overcome the world. He has come forth from God and has brought peace to this our world, so that we, right in the midst of our ordinary, daily life, may live protected by the peace of God in Christ Jesus: in the midst of this world partakers of the life of the world to come.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—*Heb. 13: 20, 21* (K.J.V.).



The Gospel of Power

Thirteen Studies in the Epistle to the Romans

By Fred J. Denbeaux

1

TWO WORLDS MEET IN ROME

Read *Rom. 1: 1, 7-15.*

TO A city of great riches, ruled by men of power and wisdom, filled with orators, inspired by victorious armies, possessing the magic name of Rome, a quite insignificant man writes a letter. In Rome a small and unimpressive group of people receive a letter. This letter would not have been considered very important by the governors of distant provinces who frequently sent dispatches to Caesar. Yet in the destiny of the world something gets twisted. The important letters are forgotten. The insignificant letter survives. The men of prominence are bypassed. God speaks and God is heard, not through the senators and the generals, but through Paul's letter to the Romans. The initiative passes from those who have ruled with heavy mailed hand to those who are quite powerless. Through weak and unknown instruments, the living God creates, with a lightness of touch, with merely his Word, the outlines of "a new heaven and a new earth."

Who are these frail vessels? Who are these unknowns in whom the foundations of the City of God are laid? Who is Paul? And who are these people in Rome who have nothing more interesting to do than to listen to someone read a letter from a traveling missionary?

Who Is Paul?

About Paul, the New Testament preacher, we know a considerable amount. We know that he was a Jew, a strong defender of the law. We know that, through fanatical devotion to that law, he persecuted his brethren who deviated from it. We shall not forget the story of his encounter with the Lord Jesus and the change that took place in his life. He became, through this encounter, the foremost propagandist for that Lord whose influence he had been trying to destroy. Throughout Asia Minor he established and nurtured congregations and became, with the consent of the

more conservative church in Jerusalem, the missionary to the Gentiles. It had been his hope to carry his message to Spain; and Rome, the seat of the Empire, would be a necessary point of entry into Spain. But before he could go to Spain or, for that matter, to Rome, he was arrested as a disturber of the peace. In about A.D. 60 he went to Rome. There he remained as a prisoner for a few years before he died. His letter, however, was written about two years before he went to Rome in chains.

But when we have said this much, we discover that we really have said very little. We shall never know who Paul was by a purely external description. We can only understand him by putting ourselves in his place. The clue to this understanding of Paul is found in the fact that Paul, like Abraham, went from the security of his home and his people to that strange and unknown world of insecurity to which God was directing him. Those of you who were soldiers will remember that the one thing that gave meaning to every man's existence in foreign countries was an intense longing to return home. We seemed to be driven, those of us who were overseas, to flee from the strangeness of countries which were not our home to that land and people where we were known and understood. Paul is driven, too, but he, unlike us, is driven from the security of home to the insecurity of an unknown world.

As a matter of fact, Christianity and homelessness somehow go together, in Paul's view of the gospel. As a Jew, Paul remembers that God had come to Israel in the *wilderness*, that there, free from all the powers with which men control their own destinies, the people had lived in obedience to him who was their only strength, the living God. When Israel became at home in the world, after it settled in Canaan and developed commerce and industry, politics and an army, it forgot its God. So God had to send Israel into exile, separated from the temptations of earthly security, that it might again learn to live by faith. And at the time of Paul,

OUR WRITER ON ROMANS

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Mr. Denbeaux was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and received the Bachelor of Science degree from Elmhurst College in 1936. He then attended Union Theological Seminary, receiving the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1939, and the degree of Master of Sacred Theology in 1940. From 1941 to 1943 he was the minister of a church in Rebersburg, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Denbeaux agreed to write these lessons because he feels that Romans has a particular message for the Church in our time. He said, "I want to write articles that will be relevant *now*, not articles that are so abstract that they are unrelated to the problems we confront today." In this spirit he has given us an exposition of this epistle that may help us hear God speaking to our Church through the mouth of his servant Paul.

Israel had returned to the haven of a religious tradition. But Paul, in the true spirit to which every Jew is called, lived as an unsettled soul whose only inheritance is the living God. He became a homeless wanderer whose only security was God and whose only habitation was the eternal Kingdom of his Lord. Now, by the plan of God, his steps were turned to Rome, the center of earthly power. He left Palestine, the land where he was known, to come as the ambassador of God, as a pilgrim without a homeland, to the center of this earth's homeland—Rome.

What Is Rome?

There were two Romes. There was the imperial city, the city of Caesar, of power. It was inhabited by men who had a home, who were very much *at home*. To them Rome was the Eternal City; it would never die. Yet it was dying, for God was building a new society. God was building the second Rome, a city of which he alone was sovereign. He built it out of the lives of those who were classified as criminals by the political authorities. These Christians were forbidden to exist because Rome would not tolerate new religions that caused controversy. They were persecuted because their loyalty was to an authority higher than Caesar. God was their authority, and their only King was one called the Christ. And because neither Caesar nor God could tolerate a divided loyalty, it was Caesar whose

days were numbered and God who was the victor when the crumbling ruins of the proud city finally fell.

No one knows how the Roman church came into being. All we know is that it was ready to hear Paul, that it treasured his letter, and that it was prepared to live by faith, before God, in the camp of the enemy. It was not blind to the dangers of its position. Yet the power of Rome caused its adherents neither to flee the city nor to forsake the faith. As citizens of heaven, they lived in Caesar's city. And so God, who came to earth through his Son, who walked the highways that led to Jerusalem, now walked farther and farther into the land of the enemy. And Paul and the Church, because they lived, like Abraham, in faith and not in security, dared to go into the wilderness of the spirit, into the city of Rome, there as unsettled spirits, to witness to him who had overcome the world. Paul and the members of the Church, separated by an ocean, were together before they ever met. Strangers on earth, they were members of the community of faith.

The Faith

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. (*Rom. 1: 8.*)¹

Those who are poor in the world and rich before God are known only by their faith. Paul does not suggest that the Roman church is known because of its roster of distinguished names, because of its organization, or because of its program. One feels that, if he were communicating with one of our churches, he, in the pursuit of what really makes a community the Church, would also ignore the men's groups, the ladies aids, the buildings, the new furnaces and the new organs. Paul is very clear here. He centers upon the essential. None of the accidental characteristics of the Church is permitted to clutter up what really matters. He is writing to it and he is coming to it because he knows about its loyalty to the faith. He knows that the community which God has established in his Church is more powerful than all the kingdoms in the world.

Apostle and Gentile

But although Paul speaks to the members of this community in terms of the highest—the faith that holds them together—he must take into account matters that are quite human. There is a special reason why he writes and why he intends to visit them. Serious misunderstandings are prevalent in the congregation as to *how* the faith is to be understood. To clarify these matters, Paul writes this letter. But by what authority does *he* instruct them? Why should they listen to *him*? Here we must look back to the first verse. Paul sees himself not only as a servant but also as an *apostle*. Now an apostle is distinguished from other believers in that he bears the special responsibility that

¹ All Bible quotations in this study section are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

comes from having been an eyewitness of the resurrection. (*Acts 1: 22.*) Inasmuch as the resurrection is the center of the New Testament, those who have observed it have a special obligation to declare what they have seen.

As we said, Paul did not establish the church in Rome. But there is a semiofficial agreement between Paul and the Mother Church in Jerusalem that Paul is to be a missionary to the Gentiles. So he is fulfilling his special calling in desiring to visit the church at Rome. (*Rom. 1: 13.*) Paul is ready to preach the Gospel, and what he has to say cannot be said by a stranger or by someone without authority. Paul is an apostle, and his semiofficial status as a defender of Gentile churches gives him the right to speak.

Servant and Saints

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. . . . To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Vs. 1a, 7.*)

However, it is not his authority that he wishes to emphasize. In introducing himself to the members of the church at Rome, Paul sets the relationship upon its highest level: he tells them that he, Paul, is "a servant of Jesus Christ." On this definition alone he dares to make his entrance into their community. When all is said and done, everything else that Paul could say about himself is not important. He could have spoken of his wisdom and his schooling in the law. He could have spoken of his important connections. He could have spoken of his skill as an evangelist. He could have mentioned the churches in Asia Minor who owed so much to him. But he does not choose to enter the Roman community in terms of skills, connections, or accomplishments. He comes merely as a servant, and a servant of Jesus Christ." And when he addresses them, he sees them also on a different level, in a different relationship, from ordinary human associations: they are "beloved of God, called to be saints." If any of the members of the Church have attained any importance in the world, one would never know it from Paul's introduction. All earthly rank vanishes in the greeting. The words *servant* and *saint* erase all purely natural distinctions. To be human is to serve God. Paul cannot forget that Jesus took "the form of a servant" (*Phil. 2: 7*). Paul therefore introduces himself merely as "a servant of Jesus Christ."

Paul, the servant; addresses himself to those who are "called to be saints." In speaking of them as saints, he is appealing to them from the point of view of their relation to God. They are not saints in their own right.

As Paul understood the word saint, this was impossible; for sainthood means, not moral purity or any state that man can accomplish, but being set apart by God and for God. It means being an instrument and a vessel through which God accomplishes his will in history. It means being a member of a community in which there are no distinctions of person. It means

What to Look for in This Lesson

Last quarter, in our lessons on John, we noted the contrast and conflict between Christ and the world. To the Gospel writer the "world" represents those forces which are alien and enemy to Christ.

Something of the same conflict is apparent in Paul's writings, as illustrated in this lesson. The two worlds, one headed by Caesar and the other led by Christ, exist side by side in the city of Rome (and in every city). Caesar's world has its doom spelled out for it; Christ's Kingdom is already victorious. The following questions will help you to see how the lesson makes this point:

1. Why is Christ's Kingdom (or world) always beset by insecurity? Why is *homelessness* an apt description of the Christian's condition in this world?

2. How can the Church today make real to itself the unworldly nature of its existence? For example, what is our relationship to the Christians who live in China?

3. Why is "servant" the highest designation Paul could give himself? What does it mean to be a "saint," according to the teaching of this lesson? (How does this interpretation differ from the Roman Catholic view of sainthood?)

freedom from the artificial prestige that the world confers upon some men, and the equally artificial insignificance that it confers upon others. It means freedom from the dehumanization of class, property, race, and country. (See *Gal. 3: 27, 28.*) The other world has grown dim—the world of master and slave, of aristocrat and plebeian. The memory of the great kings is fading. Something new has happened, a brotherhood has appeared upon the earth, a community of men who know each other simply as *servant* and as *saint*.

Paul, as we all know, had been a faithful Jew, so faithful to the form of his religion that he went out of his way to persecute those who could not think exactly as he did. Then something happened on one of his journeys. Paul, strong and proud, who had hailed men to their judgment, now himself stood under God's judgment; and those who emerge out of God's awful judgment emerge as servants. This is all that is left to them.

Now the picture becomes clear. Behind the drama of Paul's letter we can see the issues and persons of the drama. Two authorities are at work. Over against Caesar and his mighty armies stand the living God and his frail instruments. The battle lines are set. On the one side the sword, and on the other side only faith. And it is in the thick of this battle, with its unbelievable victory of faith, that we find Paul, "a servant of Jesus Christ," and the church of Rome, the saints of the living God.

MAN'S DESTINY IS EASTER

Read *Rom. 1: 2-6, 16, 17.*

FOR some time at the beginning of the church in the imperial city, Rome practiced a "hands-off" policy toward the Christians. It thought that these people were just another offshoot of Judaism, and Rome had learned to treat the impulsive and quick-tempered Jews with caution. It wanted as few riots as possible in its restless, widespread Empire.

But the time came when the Christians, by being true to their gospel, revealed that the immunity granted to Jews could not apply to them. Christianity was a new religion that challenged the faith of Rome and the life of Rome at many vulnerable points. Therefore, Rome had to suppress this bold new rival to Caesar-worship and its immoralities.

There was a sense, however, in which Rome's original understanding was closer to the truth of the matter. Christianity had a tie to the religion of the Hebrews that it could never slough off. So as Paul writes to the Romans, he speaks of the gospel as something "promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures" (*Rom. 1: 2*). The faith associated with Jesus Christ is not a religion dreamed up by some men in Jerusalem. It really isn't new at all; it has been written into the foundations of the world. The Christian faith is not a fashion of the moment. It can only be understood if one sees it as an expression of God's love, grounded not in what men of recent times, like Peter or Paul, had taught, but grounded in God's promise, which had been given to the prophets. (See *Isa., ch. 53.*)

It is of this gospel, promised so long ago and now fulfilled, that Paul would speak to the Romans. He desires to tell them "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Rom. 1: 3*). This is more difficult than it sounds. It would be easier for Paul to talk about himself, his sacrifices, his suffering, his talents. But he doesn't speak of himself, except as "a servant of Jesus Christ." The servant must talk about his master. Being a loyal follower, Paul does not care to put himself between any believer and that Lord to whom the Church looks.

"Seed of David . . . Son of God"

Paul tells his readers that Jesus "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (*v. 3*). It is important to remember that Jesus was born a Jew. He was a true human being. According to Paul, he was so human that his ancestry could be traced back to David. Paul's emphasis was important then and it is important now. Well-meaning but misunderstanding people were trying to look at Jesus as if he were a god, as if he had not really been in the flesh. Some thought of him as a

ghostly, superhuman figure who merely borrowed a human body. But Paul insisted that Jesus was a real man as well as a God.

We can understand this feeling, for it happens among ourselves. We grow so accustomed to thinking of Jesus as the Son of God that we forget that he really shared this life of ours. Jesus becomes buried under the paraphernalia of our worship. We raise him up until he is very far beyond us. As we remember all that he has done for us, it is difficult to remember that he bore his love while afflicted by all the burdens of hunger, suffering, temptation, and, finally, the agony on the cross. He was made "of the seed of David according to the flesh." He belonged to the earth, just as we belong to the earth. He is no angel, nor does his life belong in a fairy story. He belongs in history. Paul would not permit false teachers to turn Jesus into something that he was not, a stranger to our life, a foreigner who would not know what it meant to be a human. If Jesus were not made "of the seed of David according to the flesh," he could never know the anguish, the sorrow, and the hope of being a citizen in a world of war and peace. All that we are and all that we must go through as human beings—all this he was.

However, if Paul feels it necessary to argue for the humanity of Jesus, this does not mean that he limits Jesus to the human. Jesus is fully human, but not merely human. Hence he tells his readers that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (*v. 4*). Into the human situation, Jesus brings the power of the living God. He *shares* our agonies and our sorrows, and he *answers* our agony. Proof that he was God lies in his resurrection.

What the Resurrection Does for Our Faith

To understand what Paul and the Church meant by the resurrection, we need to look at it, not as a strange "miracle," which by its very strangeness excites us into belief, but as the expression of God's redemptive activity. "By the resurrection from the dead" Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God with power." By the resurrection, a hungry world is filled. By the resurrection, a lost world is found. By the resurrection, we receive a Lord. The world apart from the resurrection is the world that is confused, wandering, far from home, without a Lord. With the resurrection, men are given a King. Before the resurrection, even the disciples represent only confusion, disagreement, and misunderstanding. When we look at Paul and Peter on the other side of the resurrection, we do not find much in which we can rejoice. All that can be said of the human beings gathered around Jesus during his earthly life has been

aid by Mark, who, speaking of the action of the disciples at the time of the arrest, merely reports that "they all forsook him, and fled."

With the resurrection, the scales fall from the eyes of the disciples. Greed is overcome, and we watch the followers of Jesus burn themselves out in the service of their Lord. Confusion and uncertainty give way to purposeful living, and the fear that robbed men of their strength is annulled. Such is the story of all who have believed, from the first disciples to the present day.

How the resurrection occurred we cannot know. We are far removed from that first Easter morning when despair was changed to joy. There will always be questions that we cannot answer. But one thing is sure: the church of Rome knew what the resurrection meant. Every Christian knows what it means to see himself lost and disorganized, sinful and stubborn, and then to see his personality suddenly filled with the power that God gives us in the resurrection.

For Paul, the most important fact about the resurrection is that it has happened. Mankind *now* has a Lord, the Son of God with power. We live in the age of redemption. What does that really mean? It means that the Christian cannot be content to make redemption a faraway hope because the Lord is risen *now*; *now* is the time for God to begin his work of redemption.

It seems natural for us always to be living for the future. The communist looks toward the final stage of history when capitalism will be overcome. *Then* men will be free and life good, he thinks. The present is only to be endured for the sake of the future. The capitalist also looks only toward the future, when the fruits of capital shall have brought plenty to the poor and justice to all men. He does not examine too carefully the obligations of the present. But Paul believes that the Lord has come; he is here *now*, by virtue of his resurrection. Therefore, the Christian is taken out of that never-never land of tomorrow and brought face to face with the responsibilities of today. The living Lord must live, *here and now*, as he does his work of justice and good will through his disciple.

Doesn't this mean that wherever our life touches another human being there is either a grave or an Easter between us? Does a grave of broken promises and forgotten hopes separate us from our children or our parents? from the other members of our communities? Or is the resurrection a bridge of forgiveness and mercy that brings together those whom misunderstanding and guilt, hope and fear have separated?

For Paul, Christ is risen from the dead. In the resurrection God gives us, with complete fullness, that power of love, humility, and obedience for which we have so halfheartedly waited. We shall see, as we go on, that Paul's whole conception of the Christian life rests upon the faith that God's truth and God's power *now* walk the earth. For Paul and the church in Rome the brave and daring words were that "we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations" (v. 5).

What to Look for in This Lesson

This lesson is an explanation of the verses assigned for study this week: *Rom. 1: 2-6, 16, 17*. Read the Scripture over several times before and after reading this lesson article, and try to put into your own words what the verses mean. In addition, consider how the resurrection of our Lord should make us zealous for social justice and for the needs of men.

Righteousness and Faith

Paul is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (v. 16). He is not embarrassed because it was God's power and not his own that delivered him from his sin. God's redemption has come and "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (v. 16). Paul does not look at the Christian faith as a belief that men have created. He understands it as "the power of God." The Church is not an organization like a political party or a club. The Church, by virtue of the gospel that is committed to it, is God's creation. It therefore stands above and judges every political party, every human organization, even those to which the people of the church belong.

It is in the gospel that "the righteousness of God [is] revealed." To understand what Paul meant by God's righteousness, we must remember the Old Testament. There God's righteousness is always seen in what he does, not merely in what he says. His truth overcomes untruth and unrighteousness. His righteousness heals, bestows mercy, restores. God's righteousness is man being made right again, right with God, right with himself, and right with his neighbor. Paul is "not ashamed of the gospel" by which God has made us whole again. It is God who accomplishes this healing. It is a work of God's, not an act of our own doing, that saves us from our sin.

It is the cross that helps us to understand the righteousness of God. The cross reveals human sin in its most terrible form. All the hidden sin of humanity suddenly breaks forth as we slay God's innocent Son. The dying Jesus shows us, as nothing else can, what we do to those who cannot defend themselves. Do *you* find that the cross helps you to understand yourself and to remember what you would like to forget? We remember the Negroes brought from Africa against their wills, children laboring in sweat shops against their wills, and women and children bombed out as the war machines rolled across the earth. When we remember what God does not permit us to forget, we know what Good Friday means and, with the Early Church, we live through the agony of the cross. But neither the agony nor the cross is the end. We are not left with our guilty memories, for in the resurrection we see that the cross which we have made is replaced with the life that God re-creates. Here God makes whole again

what humanity has destroyed. Here God draws all who are willing to measure themselves by the cross and who dare to acknowledge his victory over our sin and death.

The Life of Faith

The life that God re-creates in us by the power of the resurrection is the life of faith: "The just shall live by faith." Faith means two things: it means that we refuse to trust in ourselves or in our own shoddy promises, and it means that we trust in God and his mercy. Recently one of our churches illustrated what Paul did *not* mean by faith. The bulletin board in front of the church bore the following message: "Man's destiny is his character." Paul would have said, "Man's destiny is Easter." The first saying, looked at from the viewpoint of the cross, is most frightening, since

it says, "All that I can ever hope to be, I now am." Paul is much more bold and hopeful, for he is saying that at Easter God makes us over again—that God gives us the chance for more love and kindness than we ever dreamed was possible. Faith dares to believe that we can yet be, by God's power, what our guilty consciences tell us we cannot be—servants instead of enemies of the living God. Faith rejects all attempts to postpone God's demand until tomorrow. Faith dares to believe what Caesar, communism, and capitalism can not understand—that we serve him *now* completely and joyfully, without regard for ourselves, our property, our politics, or even our nation. If you can believe both what the cross reveals about you and what God reveals for you in the resurrection, then you know what Paul meant by saying: "The just shall live by faith."

3

SIN, THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT

Read *Rom. 1: 18 to 3: 20.*

This lesson deals particularly with *ch. 3: 9-20.*

PAUL's doctrine of sin is both easier and more difficult to understand than any of his other doctrines. It is easier to understand because he is talking about ourselves; we ought to be able to understand ourselves. However, in helping us to understand ourselves, Paul drives more deeply into the matter than we care to go. And there is our difficulty. We cannot understand ourselves unless we talk about our sin, and that is the subject we would like most to avoid. Nevertheless, if we would understand the teachings of Paul—and if we would know ourselves as we really are—we must examine this thing which is so deeply imbedded in our lives.

Furthermore, if we are to know what Paul is talking about, we must understand sin in a terribly *personal* sense. It will not help us to understand sin by thinking of other people. A great European thinker of the last century (Sören Kierkegaard) has said, "How sin came into the world every man understands by himself alone; if he would understand it from another, he has misunderstood it." If we would comprehend Paul, we must do it in this spirit.

Sin is a *predicament*. It is a problem to us. It seems to be part of our situation as human beings. It seems to be both regrettable and inescapable. Although it sometimes expresses itself in habits, sin itself isn't a habit that can be changed. Sin pursues us, and when we are most confident of escape, then we are most surely in its clutches. All of us have had the experience of struggling against some form of pride, only to discover that as soon as we thought we had conquered the prob-

lem, it broke out in a new way. We are caught again and again, because, although we seem to have some control over our actions, we have very little control over our hearts. Jesus underscored this inescapable fact when he said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (*Matt. 5: 27, 28*).

Paul, in our lesson today, asks us to look at the inner spirit and not merely at the outer action. It is this inner spirit which causes us to put ourselves always in the right. We would rather have men think well of us than be truthful with ourselves. Being afraid, we are constantly shading the truth to our advantage. We feel that we must protect our ego. Yet the more we protect our ego, the more disobedient it becomes.

Is No One Righteous?

Let us begin by agreeing with Paul. Sin is more terrible than we sometimes care to admit. There is a great deal more of it in our lives than we want to talk about. At the same time, some of us will feel that Paul is being unnecessarily gloomy about it. Granted that sin exists, is the picture as black as Paul is painting it?

There is none righteous, no, not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable;

There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open sepulchre;

With their tongues they have used deceit;

The poison of asps is under their lips:

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Their feet are swift to shed blood:
Destruction and misery are in their ways:
And the way of peace have they not known:
There is no fear of God before their eyes.

(Rom. 3: 10-18.)

Notice how he emphasizes that *no one* understands, that *none* seek after God, that *none* do good, "*no, not one.*" Is the situation really that bad? Isn't there any difference between people? Should not Paul recognize that there are degrees of sin? If we admit that there is a great deal of sin, shouldn't we also ask Paul to admit that some people are less sinful than others? Isn't there a difference between a man who openly curses God and one who is at least trying to find God, even though his own sin stands in the way? No. Paul seems to be saying that there is no difference between a man who gives in to sin and one who struggles against it.

Most of us would be tempted to disagree with Paul. We live in a very complicated civilization, and it is important that we be able to tell the difference between people who are corrupt and those who are at least trying to do what is right. Wouldn't Paul's position make it impossible to vote? How, if all are under sin to the same degree, can one tell the difference between a congressman who fights for justice and one whose vote can be bought by the highest bidder? Why, in the face of such real difference between a Hitler and a Lincoln, does Paul talk in this peculiar sort of way?

We need to be fair to Paul. He knows that there are real differences in behavior and that these differences count for something. He can tell the difference between adultery and decent sexual relationships (see *I Cor.*, ch. 5). He himself distinguishes between those who are obedient and those who live as they please (see *Eph.*, ch. 6). At the same time he insists, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" Let us try to see what he means by this puzzling statement.

In the first place, let us ask ourselves a question. Why are *we* so bothered by his assertion? One of the reasons why we like to think that there are relatively good people is that *we are really thinking of ourselves.* Generally we attribute goodness to people who behave as we do. Although we are willing to allow Paul to speak of the sins of our enemies, we are not quite so willing to have him speak in the same way of the sins of our friends. It is always difficult to believe in the goodness of those who hold a set of ideas radically different from our own. Thus the communists limit the good to their own way of life. Some businessmen may be more likely to think that the philosophy of another businessman represents virtue than they are willing to accept the point of view of a labor leader. In the same way we resist Paul because, whenever we think of virtuous people, we are really thinking of people who are like us. But there is a very real sense in which even the Christian must say that "*none doeth good,*" not even our own kind of people. God alone is the judge of what is good. If we follow Paul, we shall learn that the first essential of faith is self-criticism.

What to Look for in This Lesson

Although it is never pleasant to realize what great sinners we are, or to see how deeply sin is rooted in our human natures, it will be good for us to examine the subject of sin as frankly and fully as Paul, in Romans, leads us to do in this lesson. It will also be good to remind ourselves that Paul has examined this subject, not in order to make us revel in our wickedness, but in order to show the greatness of God's grace and our need of his sustaining power.

1. Do you agree that "*there is none righteous, no, not one*"? Does this lesson analyze correctly our resistance to this doctrine?

2. What is the difference between knowledge of the law and obedience to it?

3. How is the law our schoolmaster?

Secondly, we ought to admit that our practice does not necessarily conform to our theory. An angel listening to us justify ourselves would be confused by the fact that, in spite of our high claim for virtue, there are wars, racial persecutions, and broken marriages in our midst. The more certain we are that we have behaved virtuously, the less this is likely to be the case. Every social relationship is threatened by the pride of those who are too sure that they are pure. Marriages are broken daily because people who behave in a very ungodly way insist that they have a godlike knowledge of being in the right. Similarly, wars reveal that, as nations strive for supremacy, each nation is too sure of both its own virtue and the enemies' vice. A Christian should learn to be most suspicious of himself when he begins to claim for himself what only belongs to God. Rather, in faith we grant God the right to judge us and to correct those actions in whose righteousness we dare not be overly confident. Righteousness belongs to God alone. Therefore, Paul is justified in holding that "*there is none righteous, no, not one.*"

Sin and the Law

By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (*Rom. 3: 20.*)

Paul has to face a special problem. He has been arguing for the terrible depth of sin. Now he faces the problem of the law. It is true that man is without righteousness. At the same time, men are conscious of the law of God; therefore, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, they know what God demands of them. If they didn't know what God demanded, they wouldn't be responsible. The tragedy of man is that he knows but does not obey.

The law of God, although known to every civilization, is an especial problem to the Jew. It is to the Jew that God has given his law explicitly. The law is there. God has spoken. No Jew can plead ignorance. Yet

what God demands is not knowledge but obedience. To use a trivial example, one could say that there is all the difference in the world between knowing the traffic laws and keeping them. Now when we think of what is not trivial—God's demand that men love one another—the problem of knowing but not doing the law becomes tragically significant. Paul is looking at the law in much the same sense as the author of *The Letter of James* when he said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (*James 1: 22*).

Paul always thinks of understanding God in a concrete way. The knowledge of God always means the service of God. If we merely know of the existence of the law and conform to it outwardly, we do not really understand the author of that law. When Paul thinks of understanding, he means giving oneself gladly to keep the intention of the law. He doesn't mean a grudging, halfhearted obedience; nor does he mean simply being aware of the existence of the law. A teacher once told of a conversation that she had with a lazy student. Each time the student was criticized for failing to do his work properly, he said, "I know that I am lazy and that I waste time." Every time he said "I know" he seemed to think that this excused him. Paul is saying much the same thing about the people of his world. Knowledge of God involves not knowledge of the law but obedience to the truth behind the law.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The purpose of the law is to open our hearts to all that God requires of us, and not to express God's demands in their minimum. The law should enlarge our horizons instead of narrowing them. Through the law God educates us to our need of him and not to self-reliance.

How the Law Shows Us Our Need

God has given the law. It is written both in our religion and in our conscience. He does not give us the law to teach us to rely on ourselves. He gives it to remind us how much we need to rely upon him. If we really understood the law and its terrible demands, we would see how *helpless* we really are. If a man reads the Ten Commandments honestly, all he can say is, "God help me!"

There are people today who find Paul both too gloomy and too complicated. All that is needed, they say, is to live a good life. They have no interest in grace, atonement, and forgiveness. Living according to the law of the Sermon on the Mount is good enough for them. One would think so—if they really did live by it. Whoever imagines that he lives by the Sermon on the Mount is either not very honest or not very bright. Look at what it requires: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you." (See *Matt. 5: 44*.)

When we read that, do we find anything in our lives that makes us confident? Paul would think such

a law would fill us with fear. Does God require so much of us? Isn't being decent enough? No, for the law bids us "bless them that curse you." The law of God reveals how far we are from what God demands. It does not make us comfortable. Its purpose is to educate us to our sin and our need of God's mercy.

A chaplain once returned with his troops from bayonet practice. Leaving behind the hate and the symbol of cruel death, the men, that evening, went to a church service during which the Ten Commandments were read. When the chaplain came to the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," he read it very slowly, and paused. He said nothing, and yet every man in the chapel knew that God was standing over against what it had been necessary for them to do. In the uneasiness before the law of God men could see how really helpless they were. Thus does Paul understand that "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Through the law that God gives us we discover our sin. In the loneliness of sin, in our uneasiness, we discover that God is speaking to us, and, even though his love brings us pain, he is calling us to place our trust in him and his everlasting mercy.



In the musical play, *Lost in the Stars*, Rev. Stephen Kumalo (played by Todd Duncan) comforts the woman his son has wronged. But Absalom, the son, does wicked deeds partly because he is the victim of deplorable social conditions, of discrimination, of prejudice. For these, all mankind is to blame. Caught in the web of sin, we create the situations that bring tragedy, sorrow, woe, and bitterness upon ourselves and others.

THE HELPLESS PRODIGALS

Read *Rom. 3: 21 to 4: 25.*

This lesson deals particularly with *ch. 3: 21-31.*

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law. (*Rom. 3: 21, R.S.V.*)

PAUL the Jew faced a real problem when he considered the fact that Christ seemed to stand apart from the law in which every good Jew had been reared, the law that every good Jew accepted as his distinctive heritage. It was a radical about-face for Paul to learn and then to teach that God's righteousness had come to men apart from the law.

A strange thing had happened to the Jews. The law that God had given to lead them to him had become an obstacle between man and God. Instead of revealing to men their *need of God*, it had made them proud and taught them to rely upon themselves. They had become legalists and perfectionists. They devoted so much of their energies to fulfilling the law that they lost their humility.

Paul recognized that even the most zealous and religious men could twist the law to suit their purposes. He could not help but see this when he remembered what had happened to the Messiah. In part, Jesus was rejected as the Messiah because he did not fit into the way that men expected the Messiah to come. By faith the prophets had known that, in spite of evil and suffering, God would be triumphant in the end. They dared to believe that, in spite of dictators and tyrants, the final word was not yet in.

At the same time, believing that the Messiah would come, men created him in their own image. They thought that the Messiah would be a royal and powerful king; and the men whom Jesus called to discipleship shared this belief with their age. Therefore, these men forsook Jesus and fled because their own ideas got between them and the Messiah whom God sent. For Jesus came, not as an earthly king, but as a suffering figure who renounced power and who invited the disciples to share with him the renunciation of an earthly messiahship.

God is God, and he is not contained in the boundaries that we set for him. The law that he gives to awaken men to their dependence upon his grace is not to be used to hold him off. God comes in the time of his choosing, and his coming is not postponed because men insist that they must first make themselves respectable by keeping the law. God does not wait. While religious leaders are concentrating on the keeping of the law, God comes, and they are so busy with their own ideas

of how salvation will come that they do not see the Holy Figure standing by their side. This is human sin, perhaps of the most terrible kind—to love one's own idea of religion and not to see the new way in which God reveals himself. Therefore, Paul emphasizes that "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested."

Redemption Is an Act of God

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (*V. 24.*)

As far as need for redemption is concerned, there is no difference between those who have the law (the Jews) and those who do not have the law (the Gentiles). Paul's word for "redemption" is "justification." What does he mean by it?

The word "justification" suggested to Paul's readers a courtroom scene. The lawbreaker, or criminal, is brought before the judge. Standing alone before the judge in that awful moment before sentence is passed, what can the criminal do? He could try to *justify* himself. He could give excuses for his conduct. He could plead ignorance of the law. He could claim that he was temporarily out of his mind. But whatever he tries to say will not change the fact that he is guilty, that he has committed a crime. He cannot really *justify* himself. Whatever he says will be a rationalization and a lie. He is helpless because of his crime and because he stands before the judge.

There is only one thing that the criminal can do: he can only confess his sin and throw himself on the mercy of the judge. The judge alone can *justify* him by exercising mercy and forgiveness.

Paul, here, has a deep insight into the healing of the human personality. How can a sinful man be made whole again? How can the man who has emptied himself of his purpose and meaning regain that purpose? Sin isn't something that we do; it is the emptiness, the hollowness that we find within ourselves when we have chosen to turn away from God. The farther we go from God the less power we have. If a man goes out farther and farther from God, constantly losing his strength with each step, what will happen if he decides to return? How *can* he return if he has spent his strength?

How does the prodigal son return? He has left his father's house. He spends his inheritance, until he is poor and helpless. While eating husks, he remembers his father's house and resolves to return, and so he does. But does he? How far can he go? Can he go up to the door and walk in as if nothing had happened? No, he cannot, for there is an ocean and a desert between him and his father. Can he sneak in the back door? No, he cannot come into his father's house. What

he has done has not only robbed him of the *right* to cross the threshold, but it has also robbed him of the strength even to lift his hand to open the gate. He has come a long distance, but the last few steps are farther than to the moon. How does he return home? How does he become a son again? How is he restored as a human being? Luke tells us that "when he was *yet a great way off*, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." How did he cross the threshold? His father's outstretched arms lifted him across. If the father had stood there with a raised fist, the son could have come no farther. But suppose the father had simply stood there without a sign?—then still the son could not have come over. It was not his right to enter unless his father invited him. And the father, through his love, lifted the memory of the past, the burden of guilt, so that the young man could walk over the threshold.

The young man does not ignore his father's outstretched arms. He does not say to his father: "I have not behaved so well as I should have. I am aware of this. I don't intend to be so silly again. My running off was really quite unlike me. It was a weakness of the moment, and I shall not permit it to happen again." No, not at all; he makes no excuses, and above all he makes no promises. He isn't in any position to promise anything. Everything has been spent. He can only say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The son does not ask the father to believe him. No, what the son does is to *believe the father*. All that he could say would be, "Here is my father's love, and by it I am whole again."

Paul is saying the same thing in less picturesque language when he says that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The only difference between Paul's explanation and Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son is that the picture that Paul gives us of the court does not convey the same notion of the warm love of the Father that one finds in the Gospel story. On the other hand, Paul's notion of justification does tell us something that is not emphasized in the parable, namely, the sovereignty of God. When the sinner comes before God, he is completely dependent upon God. God alone can justify him, pronounce him righteous. It is God who acquits men before the law. It is not the law, nor is it man's will power. It is the grace and mercy of God, freely given, that restores us to him.

What We Must Do

The grace so freely given always asks something of the criminal. The criminal cannot stand sullenly before the judge, utterly indifferent to his punishment. No criminal can expect that the judge would even consider him if he, as a lawbreaker, were proud of his sin. The judge tries to find in the criminal some sign that he understands his situation, that he knows what he has done and before whom he stands. What

What to Look for in This Lesson

Last week the stress was on our great need of salvation. This week Paul emphasizes how we can neither save nor help ourselves. Next week we shall be considering more fully what has already been brought out in these two lessons: that it is the grace of God in Christ which does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

1. Why is the law powerless to save us? (Recall your class discussions of legalism in earlier quarters.)

2. How does the parable of the Prodigal Son help us to understand the doctrine of justification by faith?

3. What point about justification does Paul add to the teaching of the parable?

4. What is meant by the phrase in this lesson article, "the unfinished business of the cross"?

the criminal can do is to confess his sin and place trust in the judge. Trust does not mean that he expects to get off scot-free. Trust means only that he is content to have his case judged and knows that, whatever the judgment, it will be just. The judge seeks the sign of repentance and trust. The sign, for Paul, is faith in Jesus Christ. God is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

How does belief in Jesus represent the sign of penitence and trust? If we go back to the story of the Prodigal Son, we could say that, for Paul, Jesus signifies the outstretched arms of the father. He is the sign of the divine mercy. At the same time, he is more than that, and it is here that Paul's thinking goes farther than the story of the Prodigal Son. The outstretched arms speak to us of the crucified Christ. When we come before the Judge, we must look where our eyes do not want to search. We must remember what we would like to forget—that we are in the Divine Court of Justice not because we have broken some minor traffic law, but because we have transgressed God's law in the most terrible way, by killing the Innocent One, his only-begotten Son.

God is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Paul nowhere says that God is merciful to those who believe that the sunrise is beautiful. Belief in nature is not the sign in which God finds our penitence and our trust. Nor is belief in one's country the sign in which God discovers that we know what we have done. There is but one sign, *Christ crucified*. When our faith is directed to him, we are made aware of both the mercy of God and our own guilt. It is Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Notice the reference in this verse to the blood of Christ. In the next lesson we shall discuss this matter

more carefully; but, for the moment, just note that Paul points our faith to the suffering, the dying Messiah.

It is his suffering and his death that we are asked to remember as we stand before the Judge. We are asked to believe that he whom we have crucified brings our redemption. Here is the agony of faith. It is the blood of redemption that keeps faith from being cheap. It is the blood of Christ that reminds us of the *cost*. We cannot accept God's mercy without also accepting our terrible sin. The arms of the father are outstretched, but they are outstretched over a hill just outside of Jerusalem, Calvary.

God calls us to him as he reminds us of the unfinished business of the cross. We return to God, but, in returning, we are asked to pass the graves that we have created. We are permitted to come back to him, but only if we acknowledge what we have done. God

invites us to come, not suddenly dressed with a virtue that doesn't fit us. We go back with our previously hidden and now discovered ugliness. We return as those whom the cross has made true again, as those who, knowing what they have done, also know how desperately they need God's mercy. The believer now dares to admit that he is a criminal, implicated in all the crimes of humanity. He does not pretend to be only a little guilty, but acknowledges that he has crucified God's Son.

So does Paul speak of *justification*. God forgives and justifies those who stand before him, acknowledging the guilt of the cross and daring to trust in the mercy of the Father. Such daring, such trust, such faith in God is what Paul means by faith. It is God who justifies, not ourselves, not the law that we think we keep, not our will power, but our firm belief that God's love is greater than our sin.

5

THE GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND

Read *Rom. 5: 1-11*.

THE word "grace" is one of the most familiar terms in the vocabulary of the Christian faith. Like many familiar words, however, it is often used without the speaker's understanding what he is saying. Let us look at its use in the teachings of Paul. To understand what Paul means by grace, we must see it in relation to both God's love and Christ's sacrifice.

The Love That Redeems

Only the love of God can make it possible for man to be a normal human being. Paul tells us that, through the divine love, "we shall be saved from wrath." By wrath Paul means the law of retribution by which a man is always punished for his sin. The moral framework into which God has placed us is absolute. Sin is never left unpunished, and, in the end, justice will be triumphant. There is no escape from this law. If a man has broken the law, he has set into motion certain forces from which he cannot escape. If, for instance, a man deceives his neighbor, then it is absolutely certain that the mark of that deception will be forever on his character. If a man has made himself into a tyrant, then it is inescapable that he will lose both the respect of his neighbors and his own self-respect (no matter how much he tries to hide it).

Paul believes that we are delivered from such wrath by God's love. God himself enters into his own order of justice, stoops and lifts us up before we are destroyed by the law that we have broken. Only God's mercy can redeem us from destruction. Only God can change the consequences of our behavior. How does this happen?

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (*Rom. 5: 6-8*.)

God loves us, not when we are virtuous but when we are still sinful. This is a new kind of love. Paul finds it remarkable that God should love a *sinner*. It is an obviously different love from that selfish love by which men worship power, money, and position. It also differs from the highest forms of human love. A soldier, in a certain sense, acts in love when he risks and gives his life for his friends and his country. Unlike the man who seeks mere wealth, the soldier actually risks his life for those whom he loves. A mother will normally risk her life for her child. The life of the child is more important than her own life. Paul recognizes that in these cases there is a certain kind of noble love. "Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." However, in this higher kind of love there is always something selfish mixed with the noble. Neither the soldier nor the mother reveals a pure love. The soldier gives his life for *his* friends and *his* country. The mother risks her life for *her* child. A soldier will risk his life, but not for those who are not his, the enemies. A mother will risk her life for the child, but not for the criminal who is a threat to her child. In the love of the soldier and the mother there is a limited and incomplete love.

But God's love is of a different quality. It is without limitation. It is given not to those who serve God but to those who are at enmity with God. "God com-

mendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's love is therefore not limited to the "good" men. God loves the *ungodly*. God loves those who have rejected his prophets and who have killed his Son. Paul finds in God that same love which Jesus demanded in *Luke 6: 35*, where our Lord says, "Love ye your enemies."

Such is the love that Paul sees in God. That God would forgive us, that he would love us *still*, in spite of the fact that we have crucified his Son—this is the love that is complete. It is this kind of love to which a child psychologist referred when he said that "a child is most in need of love when it is most unlovely in its behavior."

We human beings may talk about love as if we understood what it means. Sometimes we even talk about it as if we had created it. But Paul reminds us that when we talk of true love, it is God to whom we must turn our minds. It is the love that gives the Son up for the sake of the Son's enemies that shows the true meaning of the word.

"Being Now Justified by His Blood"

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (*Vs. 9-11.*)

When Paul speaks of the blood of Christ, his first readers understood what he meant better than we shall. The sacrifice of animal life was a normal part of the Jewish religion. From earliest times men had believed that it was an obligation to share with God the fruits of the harvest and the flock. They would bring their sacrifices to the Temple, where they would be prepared by the priests. For many of the people in the time of Jesus this sacrifice signified the willingness to give their lives and substance to the service of God. To others it must have seemed to have been a kind of bribe in which men placed themselves on the good side of God. It may have seemed to them to be a kind of insurance that would help God to reward them with even better flocks and crops.

Although the official religion welcomed sacrifice, there was a minority of the Jewish thinkers who pointed out its limitations. Many of the prophets had felt that sacrifice focused attention on the wrong thing. It was felt that what God required was justice; as long as men sacrificed animals or grains, they were likely to believe that this was all that God required. One of the greatest protests against sacrifice was made by the prophet Micah:

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. On the basis of this lesson, can you define what Paul means by "grace"? Do you see how inclusive a term it is?
2. In what practical way is the love of God superior to human love?
3. Do you see how Paul is closer in his idea of sacrifice to Micah than to the priests?
4. Define the word "atonement."

With calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
And what doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God."

(*Micah 6: 6-8.*)

The readers of the letter to Rome would know that Paul was referring to the Jewish tradition of sacrifice when he spoke of being justified by the "blood" of Christ. Paul, however, is much closer to Micah than he is to the priests who encouraged the people to make their own sacrifices. He wants his readers to see that all their sacrifices are nothing compared to the sacrifice that God has made. When he refers to the *blood of Christ*, he is changing the whole idea of the sacrificial system. The notion that God either desires or is satisfied with our sacrifices is broken by the shock of God's own sacrifice. It is God, not man, who gives himself for the atonement of our sins.

This idea is at the very center of the Christian faith. It is stated perhaps most perfectly in the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Paul is holding to the same point. God's great sacrifice, his love, is not limited to the virtuous but is freely given for the sinner.

The idea of the divine sacrifice, the immeasurable love of God which heals man, centers our eyes on a new note, a note that distinguishes the Christian faith from every other faith. For the first time, through Paul's thinking, we are enabled to see both Jesus and the Old Testament separated from all humanistic attempts to center attention on man. *God* is the Redeemer. By *his* love *he* stoops to our weakness. By *his* sacrifice we are healed.

Paul speaks of this healing as the *atonement*. By this word he means that God has taken away our guilt. The law of God does not ignore human sin. Men who abuse God's law are guilty. The evil that we have done cannot be undone. And yet that evil can be forgiven. The God against whom we have sinned can save us from the just punishment that is due us. He can save us from ourselves. He does this by bearing

the punishment, by bearing the sin, and by permitting his innocent Son to die. Every reader of Paul's letter would understand that Christ did die for him. Every



MAN OF SORROWS, by Guido Reni

believer would know that, by God's mysterious love, he himself had chosen to suffer rather than to permit him to bear the cross.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed."
(Isa. 53: 4, 5.)

"This Grace Wherein We Stand"

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5: 1, 2.)

Protestantism takes its stand on these words of Paul. Our peace is solely through Jesus Christ. We know no other Lord. We have no other strength. He is our peace.

On what do men stand? Men have stood on various powers. There are men who stand on the power of their own wills. Others have staked their lives on their country. Others have believed in their cleverness. There are men in every civilization who have a supreme confidence that they can win every battle by their wits.

Sometimes we can see that we ourselves live and

stand on such principles. When the world seems to turn against us, we may sustain ourselves by an admiration for our own superiority. Sometimes when we feel most injured by life, we are even able to nourish our bruised ego through pitying ourselves. Paul, on the other hand, knows nothing of this kind of strength. Our life and our hope is fulfilled in "this grace wherein we stand."

Nor does Paul have any confidence in the works of the law. We cannot place our trust in our good works. We cannot place our trust in our own incomplete and limited love. Here Paul and every Protestant stand apart from the Roman Catholic emphasis on salvation through works. Good works are a part of the Christian life. Paul sees them as the fruit of faith, but they are not the ground on which we stand.

As long as we follow Paul on this point, we have a deeper sense of what our redemption means. Because we are so aware of our sin, we can trust in nothing less than God. We cannot be content with an outer reformation of our life. We cannot find pleasure in the fact that we sometimes force ourselves to be decent. Rather, we covet for ourselves that freedom to live as our Lord lived, the freedom to live in complete and absolute love. It is the inner renewal, the transformation of life that we seek. We know that we have no strength to be pure and perfect. But we also know that God requires no less of us. Therefore, our trust is in him who has commended "his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When we begin to seek after some strength outside ourselves, we turn from self-admiration to the faith that God loves us. And faith tells us that this love is everything.

The advantage of Paul's position on grace is that it frees us from concern with ourselves. As we trust God, we become simple human beings who can serve God and our fellow men without always feeling that we must watch out for ourselves. Instead of trying to compromise by giving fifty per cent of our life to God while keeping fifty per cent for ourselves, we learn in our dependence on God's grace to give devotion to him who made us. This is what Paul means by being a servant of the living God. The servant gives his life *without reservation* to the service of his Master.

When the Christian can so trust the love of God that he is no longer a slave to his own desires, then he has become a free and full human being. Then he can live in that humility and service for which he was created. The world may tempt us, and we, in our own strength, may become weak, but our joy and hope is that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Therefore,

We glory in tribulation also; knowing that [by grace] tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Vs. 3-5.)

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

Read *Rom.*, *chs.* 6; 7.

This lesson is based particularly on *ch.* 7: 7-25.

IF WE lost everything that Paul had ever written except these few verses, we would still have his entire theology. In previous verses, he has been showing the conflict between the law and the gospel of faith. He has made a strong case. He has shown his readers that their redemption depends not upon their will power but upon God's loving power. Therefore, salvation consists of faith and gratitude rather than striving. He has directed the minds of his readers from what is human to what is divine, and he has assured them that the meaning of the Christian faith is to be found in an act of trust.

Justification by faith, you will recall, is the theme of this letter to the Romans—see the key verse, *ch.* 1: 17. Now in order to emphasize this idea, Paul has been minimizing the law. Its only function appears to be to give us knowledge of our sin (*ch.* 3: 20). Suddenly Paul seems to realize that some of his readers might misunderstand him. They might think that he wants to omit the law. Perhaps they believe that Christianity means that man may *live as he pleases*. Paul asks and answers this question. "Is the law sin? God forbid." (*Ch.* 7: 7.) He is very emphatic and is properly horrified by the thought that someone might use what he is saying as an excuse for moral laxity. Paul could never be sympathetic with anyone who flagrantly violated the law or who imagined that he was above the law's claim.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (*Rom.* 7: 12.)

Paul realizes that, if the law were taken away, man would be without meaning. He may not do what the law requires, but nevertheless the law is essential to his life. All that is distinctive about man depends upon the fact that he lives *under law*. Law gives man the possibility of an ordered life without which life would be pure anarchy. We cannot do as we please. We are not atoms whirling in space. Our whole life reveals both pattern and purpose. Can you imagine a family as we know it without some laws regulating the conduct of its members? Can you imagine what would happen to the state if each man acted just as he wished? The law of God is written into the constitution of our existence. We are bound to it. We cannot be nine feet tall either by willing it or by taking extra vitamins. We cannot be a dictator and still have the free support of our subjects. We cannot make war and still be regarded as a peace-loving nation. We cannot be unfaithful to our wives and still have their respect.

The law limits us and keeps us from being little gods. Paul will not tolerate disrespect for the law. It is of God, and therefore not subject to man's repeal.

The Law Reveals Hidden Sin

I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (*V.* 7.)

The Christian will especially acknowledge his debt to the law, since it is the law that helps him to recognize his sin. The law is not the cause of sin, but it forces sin into the open. The Commandment of God sets life in motion—the wrong way. It is not easy to say *why* this happens, but each of us can think of many illustrations of *how* it happens. If you tell a child that he may not cross the street, then the child feels an increased desire to do so. When we are forbidden something, then we are determined that we shall have or do what is forbidden us. The more laws that limit us, the more we are frustrated and the more we scheme to get around the laws. By the law we stand revealed as deceivers, as schemers, as sly cheaters. The law doesn't make us into tricksters. It starts us into motion, so that we show up the trickery that lies sleeping within us.

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

(*V.* 9.)

Paul is really writing the story of every man. As soon as we become conscious of God's law, we become law-breakers. Without the law, we would be untested. Without the law, sin would be hidden. With the law, sin comes to life; it literally breaks out. By it man discovers his separation, his distance from God; he discovers that there is a price to pay, that he must henceforth live outside of Eden. So Paul sees the law. It is good because it brings to the surface what would otherwise be hidden, and what is hidden must be revealed if we are to become truly human.

The Divided Soul of Man

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I

find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity of the law of sin which is in my members. (Vs. 14-23.)

In these verses there are three main ideas. Paul wants to show the *helplessness* of man who is caught between two warring forces in life, the *law of God* and the *law of sin*.

The law of God is the surest thing that man knows. It is the one fixed point in man's changing world. By it man can chart his course as surely as the sailor can and his way by the sun. Everything changes, but not the law. Civilizations come and go. Man begins as a primitive savage; he moves slowly through the ages until he is able to direct nature for either good or evil. Each new group that comes to power rejects the wisdom of the old order, but finds that it is confronted by the same moral law. Human regulations can be repealed and human governments can be overthrown, but the law of God is eternal. It doesn't matter whether or not the law is recognized by the people. It stands behind them and their thinking. All may betray it, but no man gets around it. Poor men and rich men, weak men and strong men, none can escape that law which Paul says has "dominion over a man as long as he liveth."

Paul speaks of another law, the *law of sin*. We can do more escape this law than we can escape God's law. As surely as there is a moral law in history, so sure is it that there are traitors to that law. Men in every walk of life will bend God's law to their own interests. History is the record not only of man's knowledge of the justice that God requires, but also the history of war, injustice, persecution, and suffering. Who would argue that this law is escapable? Who imagines that corruption and betrayal can ever be avoided? There is a perversity about all human experience that seems to run counter to the law of God.

Sometimes it is easier to see one law than the other. Optimists usually see all history as only the working out of the law of God. For them evil is only temporary or an illusion. Good is bound to triumph in the end. Man is a hero, overcoming all obstacles. On the other hand, the pessimist is the one who cannot see God's law because his vision is concentrated on the law of sin. Nothing is really good. You can be more certain that men will cheat you than you can be confident that they will be honest. The law of sin always wins out.

Paul's view is a little more dramatic than that of either the optimist or the pessimist. He doesn't think of man as good, like the optimist, or as evil, like the pessimist. Paul would not know how to account for the evil in history if men were good; nor would he understand how to account for the conscience of man if men were evil. Paul's view is more complicated, yet truer to the facts of human experience. His view is that although man knows the good, he does the evil.

"For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." The best word to describe Paul's view of man is the word *tragic*. Man lives not by one law but by two. He lives in the middle of a contradiction. Paul "delights in the law of God," but he also sees "another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind."

What shall we make of this idea? What does it mean to live in the middle of two laws that contradict each other? What man has not been struck by the struggle of purity and impurity within him? Who can forget how quickly one moves from a pure love to a sensual love? One of the greatest illustrations of this "doubleness" in man is given by a Russian writer, Dostoevsky. In the book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, one of the characters, Mitya, tells about the problem of his love. He is agonizing because within his love there is both purity and perversion:

"God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side. . . . I can't endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna. . . . The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."

Mitya's struggle, like Paul's, is the struggle of every man. Each one of us has his ideal of the pure, living alongside the memory of the pleasures of the Sodoms. For some of us Sodom may mean willfulness and stubbornness instead of sensuality. Why can we not forget Sodom, and why does it continue to tempt us, even when we are struggling so hard to be pure? Why, when we are living in Sodom, can we not forget that God has called us to a higher destiny? This is man's problem and his tragedy. If he could be good, or if he could be evil, he could have some peace. But he is both, and he is torn between the two. "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Now we can see why Paul views man as being so helpless. Man has a will, "but how to perform that which is good I find not." He is weak and incapable, with his heart divided between the flesh and God's law. Facing the law of God and the law of sin, he finds himself unable to choose decisively. He is a hollow man, filled not with resolution but with straw. The laws are strong. God calls, and sin calls too; he hears them both and is unable to obey either completely. High over Paul there is a command that he can never quite forget: "Thou shalt not covet." Below, where he lives, there is a world of covetousness of which he is a part. The stars shine brightly above while man is caught below in a world of envy, jealousy, and greed. Man sees the light above him, but the light only

makes him miserable, as he is wallowing in the mire below. "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Is it any wonder that Paul's faith in God should be so strong? How could man be confident in himself? All that Paul can do is to give a cry of anguish.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (V. 24.)

It is *deliverance* that is required. Someone else, whose love is without limit, must stoop to man's weakness. It is God alone who possesses such love. It is God who enters into man's life and breaks the deadlock between the law and sin. Man is not left alone and miserable in his covetous and sinful world. God comes to him, and with deep gratitude Paul gives the answer to all human need.

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. What is the positive function of the law in human life?
2. Does Paul's analysis of the human situation confirm what you have thought about your own internal conflicts? Do you see how he is neither an optimist nor a pessimist about human nature?
3. How has God broken "the deadlock between the law and sin"?

The power that Christ brings is the power of redemption, a power that lifts man out of his weakness and restores him to a new relationship to God.

7

THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US

Read *Rom., ch. 8.*

This lesson is based particularly on *ch. 8: 1-27.*

PAUL, in *Rom., ch. 8*, speaks of the Holy Spirit in a practical manner. He tells how the Spirit helps us, what it makes us able to do. As we begin the study of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, however, it is well to remind ourselves that this doctrine is one of the most difficult to understand. It wasn't especially difficult for the first readers of Paul's letters, but it is for us, since we have lost touch with the Biblical ideas. We consider ourselves to be Trinitarians, believing in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; but although we are able to explain our belief in God and Jesus with some degree of intelligence, when it comes to the third Person of the Trinity, we are tongue-tied. Protestantism has somehow failed to give its followers a living sense of the reality of the Holy Spirit. It will only be possible for us to recapture what has been lost if we are willing to go back to the world of the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, since that is Paul's background for his discussion of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament God is understood in two ways. In the first place, he is understood as the majestic Creator and sovereign Ruler of history. He is holy and sacred, and before him "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance" (*Isa. 40: 15*). God is so far beyond man that he "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" (*v. 22*). But God is not simply the Creator who is far beyond man. He also is able to be intimate and personal while re-

maining the Creator. Thus the psalmist wonders:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

(*Ps. 8: 3, 4.*)

This is one of the great mysteries of the Biblical faith—that it is able to speak of God not only as the infinite Being who controls the universe, but also as the One who enters into a special and personal relationship with man. When the infinite God comes into such a personal relationship with man, it is always through his Spirit. The Spirit of God always signifies his closeness, his intimacy with man.

Originally this spiritual closeness was associated with the *breath* of God. So it is that in Genesis it is said that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The Spirit or breath of God, signifies not only the closeness of God but also man's life coming from God. The early Hebrew understood the breath as life itself. Take away a man's breath, and you have killed him. Give a new-born infant air in its lungs, and it begins to live. The life, that which gives us motion and vitality comes from God. Without the Spirit of God we are only so much dust. Thus the psalmist can say:

"Thou takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.

Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created."
(*Ps. 104: 29, 30.*)

The Spirit is always associated with the intimacy of God's presence. It is always the source of life. By the Spirit, God makes dead material such as dust be-

come a living soul. Wherever the Spirit is present, life is coming into being through either creation, renewal, or redemption.

This idea of the Spirit as the intimate and life-giving power of God is also assumed in the New Testament.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus imparts power in the following manner:

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he *breathed* on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (*John 20: 21, 22.*)

And in the book of The Acts, Pentecost is described in a way that suggests that the Church's origin came from the wind that God had set in motion in their lives. (See *Acts 2: 1, 2.*)

So when Paul uses the word "Spirit," his readers will know that it indicates the *life-giving presence* of God. When the Spirit enters into the heart of a man, he is moved to act as God would have him act, to be *alive* in a spiritual sense. When men begin to live, then the Spirit has come.

Flesh and Spirit

In *Rom.*, *ch. 8*, Paul speaks at length about the flesh. The flesh is not evil, according to Paul's view. It is weak, and weak because it is Spirit-less and powerless. The body is, however, not a source of strength. When the Spirit is not present, the body is impotent. It is only biologically alive, not alive to God.

The flesh is not evil, and yet there is something evil about the flesh. Paul says that "to be carnally minded is death" (*v. 6*). The carnal, or fleshly mind, is at enmity against God. What is evil is not the flesh but the *trust* that we place in the flesh. This is sin: to give our worship to the body, or to our material existence. Jeremiah had said:

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man,
And maketh flesh his arm."

(*Jer. 17: 5.*)

To place our trust in matter, the body, or our human strength, is, in a larger sense, what Paul means by being carnally minded. You will immediately think of many examples of carnal-mindedness in American civilization. The man who "minds the things of the flesh," who lives for sex, whose life is wrapped up in his sexual life, is carnally minded. In another sense, the man whose life is centered in his material comforts is also carnally minded. The citizen of any country who trusts in his country's armaments, factories, etc., also minds the things of the flesh. "To be carnally minded is death." To center one's mind in material existence is to rob God of the devotion that belongs to Him alone.

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

The Spirit and Christ

But Paul reminds us that Christians "are not in the flesh." Our minds, because of the divine love, are no longer centered in human *strength*. Our bodies, once so weak in the service of the Lord, are now quickened by the "Spirit that dwelleth in you."

How does the Christian know that the Spirit of God is moving him? In Paul's day, and ever since, there have been many who have claimed to be inspired by the Spirit. Very frequently people have assumed that since the Spirit gives life, the evidence for the presence of the Spirit is to be found in a frenzied excitement in the believer. Paul was not thinking of this kind of behavior. We are united with the New Testament world in believing that the Spirit must be of Christ. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Elsewhere, in *I John 4: 1, 2*, we have an even firmer admonition:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

Both John and Paul are pointing back to Jesus. If you want to recognize the Spirit, you will do so by looking at its activity in relation to the life of Jesus. What is not in the life of Jesus cannot, and should not, be in the life of the Spirit. Inasmuch as Jesus does not give us the picture of an emotionally unbalanced life, we need to be doubtful about any kind of "spiritism" that simply reflects an excited and primitive exhibition.

The Spirit and Suffering

In *Rom. 8: 12-25* Paul emphasizes that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." How do we know this?

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,
that we are the children of God. (*V. 16.*)

What does this mean? How does the Spirit bear witness for us? Paul is thinking of the initiative that God expresses in his relationship to man. Karl Barth, in his book, *Dogmatics in Outline*, asks us to "think of the men of the Bible. They did not come to faith by reason of any kind of proofs, but one day they were so placed that they might believe and then had to believe in spite of everything." This is what the Spirit means: that one believes in spite of everything. Perhaps some of you have found yourselves discouraged with the Church. (It has a lot that is discouraging in it.) Perhaps some of you have been even more discouraged with yourselves. Perhaps you have asked yourselves the question, "When I look at myself honestly, what right do I have to call myself a follower of Christ?" And then, perhaps, in spite of all your questions, in spite of the weakness of the Church and your own unworthiness, you find that you are *nevertheless* a follower of Christ. This is what Paul means by the

Spirit. Only God's Spirit can convince us that he wants us *in spite of everything*.

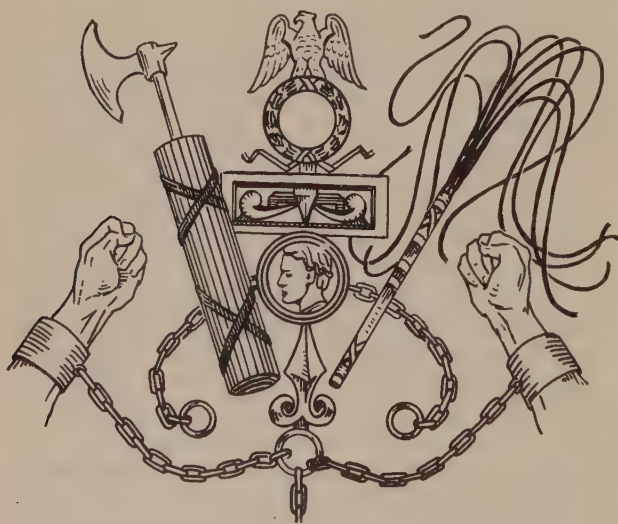
Now Paul gives us an even better test of the authenticity of the Spirit in our lives. The Spirit is not mere emotionalism or feeling. Paul says that we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (V. 17.)

Notice that Paul is saying that we are heirs *if* we suffer with Christ. The real mark of the presence of the Spirit is not feeling, but suffering.

It has been said by some that Christianity is an easy religion. All that is required of a man is that he keep a few simple rules in this life; then he will be rewarded with heaven. Such a statement may be a true picture of the way Christians have sometimes behaved, but it is not true to the Bible. The religion of the Bible is not an easy religion of rules. It is a religion that requires, because of faith, a man to be willing to suffer for God. Thus Abraham leaves the shelter of his native land and becomes a wanderer for God. Moses leaves his comfortable existence and goes back into Egypt to risk death in order that God's people shall be set free. The prophets stand against their society, risking not only death, but dishonor and isolation.

Living in the Spirit involves the risk of losing one's life. Jesus said: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10: 38, 39.)

When men live by the Spirit, they risk making enemies of those who glorify the flesh. The Christians in Rome knew that they had to make a choice. They



CONQUERORS IN CHAINS

The Christians in Rome knew that they had to make a choice. They could follow Christ or Caesar, but not both. That they were willing to risk their life and property for the sake of the Christ was the evidence of the Spirit in their lives.

This drawing is by Albert Jousset and is from the story of Paul, *Conqueror in Chains*, by Donald G. Miller.

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. Note how Paul does not so much *define* the Holy Spirit as *describe* what the Spirit does. Compare this with *John 3: 8*.

2. List for yourself what the Spirit does, according to *Rom., ch. 8*. Consider how much of this he has done in your life.

3. Why is it wrong from a Christian point of view to think of the flesh as the evil part of man?

could follow Christ or Caesar, but not both. That they were willing to risk their life and property for the sake of the Christ was the evidence of the Spirit in their lives. Without the Spirit leading them, they would have relaxed into some compromise with the worship of Caesar.

We reveal the Spirit's presence if, when we are confronted with two ways of conduct that allow us to choose between an easy and a hard way, we take the always costly, and usually unpopular, road. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (*Luke 6: 26*.) The man who finds himself justifying materialism as a way of life is only coveting the applause of those who live by the flesh. The believer who lives by the Spirit will not bow to the Caesars of this world.

It will also be true that we, who live by the Spirit, will *mortify the deeds of the body*. We will not only risk unpopularity but we will also discipline our own flesh. This means that the believer will bravely submit his life and habits to the Spirit. He will not take himself for granted. A father who gives up the proud authority by which he forces his child to obey him learns something of suffering as he begins to bear the burdens of his children instead of merely commanding their obedience. Each of us can think of many ways in which we avoid the suffering that belongs to the life of the Spirit. When we live in the flesh, we are willing to cause suffering to others because we are trying to avoid it for ourselves. In the Spirit, we bear the suffering that unites us with our Lord.

Paul's view of the Spirit is now clear. We are in the Spirit when we share Christ's sufferings. Yet, we do not suffer alone.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. (*Rom. 8: 26*.)

As we suffer, we find ourselves strengthened. He who sends us on our journey does not forget us. He who invites us to take up our cross and follow Jesus does not forsake us. When we begin our Christian life, we are uncertain; but the closer we come to the cross, the surer we are that *God is love*. Strangely, our strength increases as we become weaker. As we lose *our* authority and *our* power, we find ourselves with those who, led by the Spirit, can cry joyfully, "Abba, Father."

WHAT CAN CONQUER GOD?

Read *Rom., ch. 8.*

This lesson is based particularly on *vs. 31-39.*

IN THE concluding verses of the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul brings his readers to the final affirmation of faith. Earlier, when he was discussing the law and human powers, he was skeptical and doubting. Now, as he pictures the life of faith, his words ring with confidence and trust. Even though the world is filled with danger, treachery, and evil, a man can live hopefully and bravely *in faith.*

Acquittal

Man faces many dangers. He is threatened by disease and death. He is threatened also by dishonor and the loss of his integrity. An even greater threat is one that he most frequently chooses to forget—the threat of God's righteousness, which holds him accountable for his sin. But if men ordinarily forget conscience, Paul does not. In the picture that he has given us of justification, he has shown us how the sinner inevitably comes and stands before the Judge. He has shown his readers that their only hope consists in throwing themselves on the mercy of the court. Man is justified by Christ's death and not by his efforts. God commends his love to us sinners, and when God expresses his love, and when the Judge declares his pardon, then the case is concluded.

If God be for us, who can be against us? (*Rom.*

8: 31.)

If the Judge frees us, then nothing more can be said. The Judge is the final authority. The Judge alone has the power to give man his freedom. Since God *is* for us, he has shown his forgiveness and his love in a way that cannot be doubted.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (*V. 32.*)

Whenever man finds reason to doubt himself, he always comes up against this fact—God has seen fit to give his only Son for his salvation.

Paul knows that there are two great forces that are moving men's lives. One force is the terrible reality of sin. The other force is the greater power of God's love. Paul knows that there is a sinful law "warring against the law of my mind" (*ch. 7: 23*). There is a persistency about sin that is frightening. We resist sin, and yet it charms us. We push pride away, but secretly it lays hold of our hearts. It is characteristic of sin that it should be strongest when we are most disgusted with ourselves. In such moments we can see only our sin. There are times when we know only Good Friday,



Worship continues in a bombed Korean church, for "what can separate us from the love of Christ?"

and it seems as if Easter could never come. Hopelessness sets in. We know that there is a God but doubt that he can really help us. We have tried over and over again to cleanse ourselves and have failed. What, then, can God do? We just aren't worth bothering about. There is too much against us. Our book is too full of black marks, and they cannot be erased. At the same time, Paul knows that the most powerful thing in the world is the love of God. We may charge ourselves with the most severe sin, and yet God has the *final* word.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (*Ch. 8: 33.*)

From Paul's point of view, the greatest sin would be to insist that God could not cure sin, to maintain that sin is greater than God. Sin is a threat, but God is greater. Evil is real—this cannot be denied, but it does not have the final word. In faith, the sinner knows that his sin has been conquered and that God has won the victory. We are guilty, but "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

A practical illustration of Paul's point is found in the life of prayer. Sometimes it is very difficult to pray. Sometimes one would rather not pray. Prayer seems hypocritical and meaningless to a man who is bound up in the hopelessness of his sin. Once sin begins to rule life, it always convinces man first of the hopelessness of his condition. "The world's in a mess—it always has been, it always will be, and there isn't

much anyone can do about it." So we begin going to church less and less, and we stop praying. Before long, if we acknowledge that God still exists, we say that he is so far away that it is impossible to talk to him. So sin has conquered and has taught us to be silent and hopeless.

It is at this point that the practice of the Church is such a good illustration of the reality of God's love. What the Church does is to open our lips through its prayers. We may come with doubts and with a sense of God's great distance from us. But the whole order of worship tells us that God is near and is at the moment having a conversation with his Church. A church service is precisely that—a conversation between God and man. In the Scripture and the sermon we face a God who speaks to us. In the responsive reading, the hymns, and the prayers, the congregation is answering God. The Church thus takes us out of our isolation and opens our hearts that we may hear, and opens our lips that we may confess.

Our private lives are filled with guilt, and alone we can do nothing about our sin. But God and his love are much more real than our sin. Each day we discover the weakening effect of sin. And yet at least once each week we are brought out of ourselves, that we may stand before God to hear of his love and mercy. It is God who opens our lips, and, when this happens, his love has overcome sin. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The Love of Christ and Suffering

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (V. 35.)

The greatest power in the world is the *love of God*. This isn't the easiest idea in which we can believe. We have in our study of Romans been able to grasp to some extent the miracle of forgiveness by which God's love is understood to be even more powerful than our own sin. But the world is filled with evil and suffering. The apostle is as realistic about this as he has been about sin. Thus he speaks of all the pains that afflict man—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword. What has the love of God to say to these things?

The victory of the divine love does not give us a world filled with rainbows. The notion that "every cloud has a silver lining" is not found in Paul. Life is not a technicolor movie in which the villain is punished and the innocent are rewarded. We and Paul know that it is otherwise. We know too that it is the innocent who suffer. Paul does not permit us to think of the gospel in a dream world. The power of God is victorious *in* a world of suffering, hunger, danger, and death. God's renewal of life is in the midst of life. *Even in the greatest of suffering, none of these things shall separate us from the love of Christ.* Wherever there are storms, wherever men die and women weep—there faith shall live—not on the edge of a wish

world, but in the middle of the real world. *There* faith enables us to live.

There have been religions which have taught that the right understanding of God helps to lift us out of the world of pain. We are all familiar with various religious sects in our own time which teach us that faith wipes out pain and poverty. If a man really believes, we are told, evil will disappear, and he will live in health and prosperity. Of this kind of faith Paul knows nothing. He expects these evils to continue until that final day when God will redeem the whole creation (see *ch. 8:23*). All that Paul can guarantee is that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God." We are assured that the love of God is the one sure fact in our lives, and that it will not be displaced, even though we suffer tribulation. We are sustained; we do not live for health, or plenty, or prosperity, or because men speak well of us. All that for which the world struggles, all the goods of this world, cannot uplift us. We are not dependent upon them. A man who is prosperous and important is no closer to God than a man who is ill, persecuted, or poor.

In these words Paul has revealed the freedom of the Christian. We cannot sell our souls to those who promise us security and freedom from suffering. Freedom from suffering is not the end of our lives, since, in Christ, we can bear all things. Christians are not for sale. We cannot be bought by the promise of security. The values of the world are not our values. We live by the love of Christ. Herein is our meat and drink.

Doesn't Paul really mean that the Christian is freed from the *fear* of suffering? Suffering is a part of life, but the Christian is not frightened by it. He knows the love of God is greater than the tribulation, the distress, the persecution that he experiences in the world. He knows this because he lives the life of grace whereby he depends not upon man but upon God for his sustaining and support. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

"Nothing Shall Separate Us"

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Vs. 38, 39, R.S.V.)

For him who lives by faith, the surest truth is the never-failing love of God. How sure is this love? How can Paul be so sure that we shall not fall from faith? We are constantly being tempted. We are not strong and we know that, like Peter, we are perfectly capable of betraying our Lord. We cannot escape our weakness and we cannot count on our own strength. If Paul were counting on human strength, his gospel would not have much of a future. But he is relying, as we have said, on the fact that God's love is the pivot of all hu-

man hope. Nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The attempt shall be made to separate us. We are not free from the need of God's help. The forces that undermine our wills and our strength are many. But they cannot prevail, for God is King and Lord over our lives. The power is his, and so we shall be taken from our faith by neither

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature. (Vs. 38, 39.)

Paul is thinking, in using these strange phrases, of all the powers that lay siege to men and rob them of their faith. Paul is speaking of all the forces that, in the ancient world, seemed to have an existence of their own. If Paul were speaking the same way in our own language, he would speak of all the pressures that play upon our fears and that make us anxious. We are anxious about so very much. Life and death are perhaps the simplest and the most ever-present. We cannot forget that we might die, that some day we *will* die, and we do not find this a pleasant prospect. When we think of the *present* and *things to come*, we are filled with uncertainty. Will tomorrow rob us of all the good things that make our lives so comfortable? Our lives are very insecure. War or calamity may rob us at any moment. It is easy to feel ourselves giving in to this anxiety, and we may well fear that the anxiety about the future might cause us to lose our faith. But Christ makes faith victor over anxiety. That is something we cannot do. We remain frail. We are not heroes. Nevertheless, Paul is confident that no person

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. Why is it that we sometimes feel separated from God? Is it something in *us* or in God that separates us? A reformed alcoholic says that if he ever takes another drink "it will mean that I have let anger or fear blot out God in my mind."

2. Why should we continue to worship and work in the church, even if we are temporarily out of touch with God because of our doubts and our anxieties?

3. How does the love of God in Christ make us superior to suffering?

and no fear shall "separate us from the love of God."

If you think of Paul's point, you will find, I am sure, that it has been true of your own experience. We have not been entirely faithful. God seems to have chosen frail vessels into which his love is to be poured. And yet, somehow we return—or we are returned. As Paul puts it, "for I am persuaded," We too are persuaded. God has chosen us to be his instruments, and although our will is weak, his is strong. What gives Paul comfort and hope is what has given hope to every Christian since—that we are where we are, and that we believe as we do, not because it satisfies some need in us and not because we are capable of keeping our life on an even keel, but because *God has spoken*, has made his claim upon us. And thus—before all the terrors of life, Paul can say with perfect assurance,

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (V. 37.)

9

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Read *Rom.*, *chs. 8 to 11.*

This lesson is based particularly on *chs. 8:28-30; 11:1-12.*

TODAY and next Sunday our lesson deals with Paul's doctrine of election. To the modern mind it will appear to be a strange doctrine. More nonsense has been written about this idea than any other of the apostle's doctrines. Let us read the text very patiently and carefully and try to see just what it is that Paul is trying to tell to his readers who were in the church at Rome.

Election and Redemption

We must begin by correcting the translation of *Rom. 8:28*. The verse reads, in the King James Version, as follows: "And we know that all things work

together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." This text can easily be misunderstood, because it seems to be saying that *our* love for God causes the universe to work to our advantage. Paul could not mean that, since he does not believe that the world does work for good. Pain and suffering do not disappear simply because love is present, as we have already seen in earlier lessons. Indeed, Paul's emphasis on the cross would suggest the opposite. Also, Paul would reject the notion that *our* love causes good to come. Paul is always trying to have his readers see that the opposite is true. It is *God's* love that renews and redeems man and his social order. This is why Paul concludes the verse with the words "to them who are the called according to his purpose." A better translation is given in the Revised Standard Version:

We know that in everything God works for good

with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.

The *good* is not good as man sees it, but good in relation to God's purpose for man. The good that comes to us when God causes love to be born in our hearts is always what is good for the work of God. Pain and suffering may continue, but to those who feel confident that they are in God's plan, these things have a meaning. He makes us able to see their meaning and to understand that, in spite of what seems to be a failure, God's ends are being worked out in our lives.

If we are to understand Paul's view of election, we must keep in mind the two main ideas that dominate his thinking and that we have found recurring again and again in this letter to the Romans. First, he has an unshakeable conviction that *man is frail because of his sin*. At the very center of human personality there is a conflict that seems to make redemption impossible. "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Ch. 7: 19.) But, on the other hand, although from the human point of view he believes that redemption is impossible, he knows that *God is faithful and that he has redeemed man through the atonement*. "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Ch. 5: 9.) Man is both helpless and lost, and yet he is also redeemed. How can the apparent paradox of these two ideas be explained? Paul finds the key in the Old Testament doctrine of election.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. (Ch. 8: 29.)

How can we understand this?

Election, or predestination, is always associated with *redemption*. It is never used in connection with purely personal decisions. Sometimes the idea of election is made into an idea of fate. It is separated from the grand scheme of redemption. Some of you have known people who have argued foolishly that God determines everything that will happen. There are people who live (perhaps they only talk) carelessly because of the idea that they will only die when their time comes. They argue that there is nothing that they can do which will influence the length or brevity of their lives. Everything is supposed to be determined ahead of time. Such an idea has nothing to do with the Bible, and certainly Paul does not mean this when he refers to foreknowledge and predestination.

In the Old Testament, election has nothing to do with the simple, practical decisions that men make in their everyday existence. It always concerns *the fulfillment and the redemption of history*. It is God who gives Israel its freedom. It is God who leads Israel out of slavery to fulfillment in Canaan. It is true that God seems to be determining the decisions of some of the important leaders, such as the kings of Israel, the Pharaohs of Egypt, or the emperors of Assyria. However, even here, he is said to be determining their decisions only in the areas of their larger responsibilities. God uses nations and kings to bring about his pur-

poses; for example, God used the Assyrians to punish the Hebrews.

On the whole, the idea of election is used to show that Israel comes into existence because it has a special place in God's purpose. The prophets resisted the idea that Israel became a great nation either because life was merely the result of accidents or because Israel had a special strength and virtue that caused it to succeed. If the prophets of the Old Testament were living today, they would deny, for instance, that America is a great nation because it possesses some special intelligence or virtue. Instead, they would affirm that we are a great nation only because God has created us for his purposes in the present hour of history. (See *Ezek. 16: 1-22*.) Thus the doctrine of election is a way of introducing Israel to a sense of humility in regard to its power. Over and over the people are asked to admit that the nation came into existence by divine invitation and not by some natural right. In its simplest terms, the idea of election means that we believe what we believe, and we live as we live, not by some power of ours, but by God's mercy. It is this sense of dependency upon God that Paul is trying to create when he speaks of the fact that God "*did foreknow*."

At the same time we still must face a problem in regard to Paul's use of the word. It can be interpreted in two ways. Some Christians have believed that the idea of God's *foreknowledge* means that God has decided ahead of time the names of those whom he is going to help "*to be conformed to the image of his Son*." It can be argued that God is omniscient, and therefore everything that happens is already written in his mind. According to this view, there isn't much that can be done about man's relationship to Christ. God has already decided that you will be related or that you will not be related. In either case, there isn't much that one can do about it.

It is, of course, difficult to tell just what was in Paul's mind. He doesn't tell us *how* he wants his readers to interpret the passage. There are those who believe Paul states his case in this way in order to emphasize the grace of God. These thinkers say that it is presumptuous for anyone to say just what God's behavior would be. It is sinful to talk about foreknowledge in a literal sense, since we are saying what God would do if he were like us. This would seem to be the worst kind of idolatry. Man can never know the mind of God or how it operates, and, therefore, we have no right to claim that God would behave as if he were a glorified clerk, checking names in a little black book according to some incomprehensible plan. The people who hold this view say that Paul could not have meant us to take him literally, since no Jew would ever imagine that he could read the mind of God. What he meant to signify with the word "*foreknowledge*" was simply that faith comes by God's help and not by our efforts. It is merely Paul's way of giving God the glory for the faith that the Christian possesses.

Whichever interpretation one follows, it is clear that Paul is talking about something more than determinism. When he speaks of "foreknowledge," he is thinking only of the fact that God conforms us "to the image of his Son." He is asking his readers to recognize that their faith comes from God and that it is not their own creation. We believe, not because of ourselves, but because of God.

The Remnant

Turning now to our second passage for study this week, we find Paul writing about the "remnant according to the election of grace." (*Rom. 11: 5*.)

Here Paul is trying to explain to the church in Rome why it is that so many of the Jews have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. The early Gentile churches were continually being weakened by Jewish teachers who, with the authority of the Jewish tradition, sought to weaken faith in the Messiah. The practical problem was this: How can Jesus be the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament if the Jews do not recognize him as such?

Paul is saying that the Messiah is the Messiah because he is sent by God and not simply because he is accepted by a large number of people. The Messiah is never the winner of a popularity contest. He therefore shows that the history of the Jewish (or any) people is the history of their misunderstanding of God. Neither Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, nor Jeremiah had received much popular support, and yet, later generations found that God had been speaking through them. So, too, Jesus stands in this role when he says: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (*Luke 13: 34*).

So Paul, by appealing to the Old Testament, has shown that the rejection of Jesus by his people is really not a very good argument against his being the Messiah. Paul might have argued the reverse. Had Christ been accepted too easily, it would have been unlikely that he could have come from God.

Therefore the Christians are the remnant "at this present time." However, Paul emphasizes that the remnant is also "according to the election of grace." The Christians do not exist by their own right and, therefore, are not to be filled with self-righteousness. The Christians are not to become proud. They are what they are because of grace and, therefore, can only give thanks to God. Again, Paul is saying that the faithfulness belongs to God alone, and it is upon God's faithfulness that the church is to be built. By God's mercy and eternal faithfulness a remnant is preserved. In spite of human hardheartedness and pride, God preserves a minority who are his instruments and through whom he brings his truth anew and afresh to each generation of his wayward sons.

The remnant of God, his saving yeast, still remains

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. Does it help you to understand predestination better to see it in terms of the larger purposes of God rather than in terms of relatively minor decisions or plans? What place does the plan for the individual life play in these larger purposes?

2. Which interpretation of "foreknowledge" seems most correct to you?

3. What is the responsibility of the remnant today? (Next week's lesson will deal specifically with evangelism of the Jews.)

in spite of the fact that the majority have rejected God's Messiah. Therefore, "salvation is come unto the Gentiles." The Gentiles represent the continuation of God's history. They now bear the responsibility of obedience and are the sons of Abraham.

There is a warning hidden in this idea of the "remnant." If the remnant is to be identified with the minority whom God has kept faithful, then the remnant cannot be identified with formal membership in the Christian community. When Paul spoke of the Gentile remnant, he was thinking of a small group. Now that Christianity has become a popular religion, what happens to the remnant? Paul leaves us with this problem. Must one not distinguish between those who, like the Jews, were simply traditional followers of God and that remnant whom God keeps faithful to his new demands? Christianity has and may now again become weak and corrupt. Paul would not deny this, but he knew that no matter how much the corruption, still God would leave us with a remnant who, in their faithfulness, would reveal what it is that God demands of each new generation.

A Word of Warning to Chosen People

"Now a word to you who are Gentiles. I should like you to know that I make as much as I can of my ministry as 'Special Messenger to the Gentiles' so as to make my kinsfolk jealous and thus save some of them.

... But if some of the branches of the tree have been broken off, while you, like shoots of wild-olive, have been grafted in, and share like a natural branch the rich nourishment of the root, don't let yourself feel superior to those former branches. ... The situation does not call for conceit but for a certain wholesome fear. If God removed the natural branches for a good reason, take care that you don't give Him the same reason for removing you."

—A translation by J. B. Phillips of *Rom. 11: 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21*, in *Letters to Young Churches*.¹

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PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Read *Rom., chs. 9 to 11.*

This lesson is based particularly on *chs. 9: 30 to 10: 16.*

TODAY'S lesson helps us to see Paul in all his humanness. He is troubled and bothered because many of his own people seem to have rejected the Messiah. It would have been understandable if the Gentiles had rejected Christ, since they had never been taught to expect his coming. But how could it be that the Jews who had looked forward to the Messiah should fail to recognize him?

The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (*Rom. 9: 30, 31.*)

Yet in spite of Israel's blindness, Paul's "prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (*ch. 10: 1*). This can only happen if the Jews are told the truth about Jesus. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (*V. 14.*) Those Gentiles who confess him must bring their message to the Jews who have not yet been able to understand. Paul does not give up hope for those who have fallen away. He shows us how the life of the Church of Christ is fulfilled in its missionary preaching.

Jews and Gentiles

The Gentiles, who have received the truth of God through the Jews, must bring the truth "back home" to those to whom God first revealed himself. We must be especially careful as we try to understand Paul here, for the relation between Christianity and Judaism is a very complex one. In the first place, we must ask ourselves whether the spirit of what Paul is saying limits our missionary activity to the Jews. Obviously, the Jews are only one small fragment of the world that does not confess Christ. At the same time, as Paul sees it, the Jews are in a special situation. Unlike many other people in the Roman world, they did know the living God. In addition, Jesus was already known to many of them, and still they would not accept his Messiahship.

The Jews are not alone, however, in having heard of Jesus and rejecting him. We should think, to be fair to what Paul is trying to say, also of others after Paul's time who have heard and rejected the Messiah. One can think of many illustrations in Church history, but let us come closer to our own time. In our own civilization there are men and women who once belonged to the Christian faith, or who have been brought up in

the Church but who now reject the gospel. Each of us knows someone, perhaps in his family or among his friends, who cannot accept the Christian faith. Like Paul, we may well be troubled so that we too pray "that they might be saved." Included in this number might be those who continue to go to church but who do it simply out of habit. Their hearts are closed. Indeed, their hearts are elsewhere—thinking of their property, or their work, but not thinking about God. Religion is something they take for granted. Their lips move during the prayers, but their hearts are like ice. Such people represent the same problem as the one that confronted Paul. How is it possible for those who once believed in God to fall by the wayside?

This is what Paul means by the Jews. He does not think of them as some special breed of men, but as those who once believed and who now believe no longer in God's new and dynamic revelation. If we think of it in this way, then the problem of the Jew, *those who fall by the wayside*, is always among us. It will be helpful if we see in this text our responsibility toward the many in our day who, like the Jews of Paul's day, had but lost the vision of God's truth.

The Need Paul Did Not Know

We do, however, have a particular duty to the Jew. We are in a different situation from that of Paul in our relation to Israel. Since Paul's time great changes have taken place that he could not possibly have foreseen. One of the more important changes is that the Jews and the Gentiles have changed places. During Paul's life, among the people who believed in the living God, the Jews were in a majority, and the Gentile Christians were in a minority. Today almost all the Western World is at least formally Christian. Today it is the Christians who rule the world, a world in which Judaism is only a slight, scattered, and fearful minority.

It is not hard, or pleasant, to understand why the Jews are fearful. Christianity has a long history of having tried to convert the Jew, not by the gospel of peace, but by the sword. During the Middle Ages the Jews were sometimes given the alternative of believing in Christ or being burned at the stake. All of us can remember that Hitler exterminated hundreds of thousands of Jews. What is more important is that the Jew can also remember Hitler. Furthermore, we need not cross the ocean to find examples of Jewish persecution. Large sections of the American public are anti-Semitic. Jews are kept out of certain professions. Their numbers in colleges are frequently limited by a quota system. They are refused admission to "Gentile" resorts and hotels. They have never been given full citi-

ship in the American community. They have been treated by Christian civilizations for centuries. Their dead are beyond number; their tragic suffering beyond our comprehension.

The way we have treated the Jew creates a problem in our relationship to him that Paul could not have known. Before we can bring Christ to the Jew, we need, for decency's sake, to convince the Jew that we are aware of our sin against him. The Jew cannot trust Christians as persons. Therefore, before we can expect a reasonable hearing, we need to convince the Jew that Christianity has no sympathy with anti-Semitism. This will involve more penitence and self-criticism than we have displayed. An Irish Protestant, lamenting over the barrier between the English and the Irish, once said that the trouble with the English was that they couldn't remember and the trouble with the Irish was that they couldn't forget. In the same way, the Jew will not be able to forget until we start remembering. It will be, God willing, possible for the Jew to see the Christ of peace behind our faith, once we have overcome the evil that is in our hearts.

The Righteousness of Men and of God

The fact that the Jew and many others have fallen away from God's grace should be a warning to us all. Israel did not by its own strength achieve a relationship to God. Israel was elected by God. It is God who initiates the relationship, whether it be to the Jews or to the Gentiles. As the Jews fall, the Gentiles cannot be filled with pride. The Gentiles might profitably remember that as the Jews failed, so too might the Gentiles. If we should be defective in our responsibility, the leadership to which we have been called might very well pass over to those whom we have called the heathen. Our relationship to God depends upon our faithfulness to him. Paul does not believe that God takes away our freedom. *We can repudiate our calling.* Remembering those who have fallen by the wayside, we can never take our faith for granted.

The Jews fell because they sought "to establish their own righteousness" instead of submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God." (V. 3.) They had insisted that the Messiah who was to come would be a Messiah of power. When he came in lowliness, their zeal for their own knowledge caused them not to recognize him.

The Christian Church is also capable of substituting its own knowledge for God's righteousness. We have sometimes insisted on certain requirements that God himself did not require. The Church has sometimes required an unimaginative and literal acceptance of its doctrines. We have sometimes insisted on certain views in regard to science, such as our opposition for years to the idea of evolution. Even worse, there have been Christians who have insisted that Christianity belongs to white men. When this happens, it is because false prophets have arisen among us who substitute their view of righteousness for that which God re-



The Wall, by John Hersey, describes the horror of the Jewish persecution in Warsaw just ten years ago. William Sharp, in this drawing, depicts the scene where the rabbi buries his sacred Torah in the cemetery, so that nothing will happen to it, even if he should be killed. . . . How do events like this persecution affect our ministry to the Jews today?

quires. The Church must always be on its guard lest it substitute *its* own idea of the truth for the truth that God demands. It would be helpful if the Church referred more frequently to the prayer of Daniel: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces" (*Dan. 9: 7*). If we thought in these terms, we should speak the truth as we see it with greater humility.

The Word of Faith

Paul helps us to understand what *is* required of the Christian by telling us how we may understand. The truth is not far from us. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." The simple requirement of faith is:

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (*Rom. 10: 9*.)

These are the only two requirements for salvation. Paul does not require the complicated additions that later Christianity has made to the faith. Here Paul brings faith down to the essentials.

At the same time, Paul is saying that being a Christian is a very heavy responsibility. When he speaks of confessing "with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," he means more than simply muttering the name of Jesus.

A confession is made publicly and in every area of our life. We confess and gladly admit that we believe in the Lord Jesus in our work and in our play, among our friends and among strangers. In short, we confess Jesus totally wherever we are. Paul does not allow us to have a "private" Jesus, hidden from the rest of the world.

Furthermore, there must be some relation between what our lips say and what our heart believes. Thou "shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead." It is in the heart that one believes in the resurrection, and here is a private world into which no one else can enter. None of us can tell what is in another man's heart, and we, therefore, have not the right to judge. In the secret place where we are all alone before God—there and there alone do we believe that "God hath raised him from the dead." Each of us must make this adventure quite alone. No one can go with us. We cannot lean on others. Before God we must answer, regardless of what others have thought. We must believe not because it is fashionable or easy, but because, for us, Jesus and his resurrection is the only truth that matters. In our aloneness, only faith can supply the answer that God seeks. Only in our hearts can we give our lives in humble surrender to him who is the Lord.

"The Gospel of Peace"

What gospel is it that we confess and that we bring to those who have fallen by the wayside? It must not be our gospel, but must be truly God's gospel. Unless we bring his gospel, the darkness will continue. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

The gospel is carried only one way. It never comes except through people who believe in it with their whole heart. God has provided no other way for men to hear of him except through the lips and pens of those

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. Many different kinds of people are included among the "Jews" of our day: those who have heard the gospel but have rejected it. Think about who they might be. Why have they not believed in the Messiah?

2. What is included in the two requirements of faith that Paul gives? Are they as simple as they sound?

3. Why is Christianity called "the gospel of peace"?

who love him. There are no signs from heaven, no direct communications from God except through his Church. The joyful responsibility of carrying God's message falls upon those who believe him.

What shall they say? Paul says simply that we shall "preach the gospel of peace."

This is the only message that we dare to bring. Whatever in us that is not of peace we cannot bring to the world. We cannot preach the gospel of the sword. Nor can we preach the gospel of the West or an American gospel. It must be the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we bring this gospel to the Jews, it must contain the peace of Christ and not our arrogance. Since it contains the peace of Christ, it must reflect our love and understanding. It must be free from pride, and it must be a gospel that helps us to acknowledge our sin. When *this* gospel is preached, we shall become transparent. The stains and the dirt shall be first wiped from the windows of our lives, so that men looking through us shall not be cut off from the vision of the risen Lord. Thus we dare to believe that because Christ is our Lord, we shall become the vessels by which his love is shared with the world.

11

THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

Read *Rom., chs. 12 to 14; 15: 13.*

This lesson is based particularly on *chs. 12: 1-8; 13: 8-10.*

IN THE first eleven chapters of the letter to the Romans, Paul has completed his argument for justification by faith. He believes that his readers in Rome will have been convinced that their redemption has come through the love of God. Up to now he has been emphasizing faith so strongly that it might seem to some readers that he is not interested in the way in which a man lives his daily life. However, Paul does

not want to be misunderstood. How a man lives his daily life is of the greatest importance. If it is to be an honest life, it must be grounded in the truth. Now that he has shown the readers what the truth is, he turns to the practical implications of God's righteousness.

The Human Response to Grace

Why has Paul said so little about what man must do? If we have understood his doctrine of justification, we can then understand why the ethical and the practical seem to be less important. Because Paul is so sure that God has overcome sin and man's slavery to the powers of this world, he knows that God's power

must bring forth a response from man. A person who isn't so sure as Paul of God's gift of the Spirit might need to spend more time talking about what he can do, simply because he wasn't sure that God had done anything at all. Most of us know that there are moments when we are not so sure as Paul was that God has entered our lives with power. And the more sure we are of God, the more we tend to become confident of ourselves. When this happens, from Paul's point of view, we have cut ourselves off from the only power that can save us.

Let us think of the problem in human terms. There is a son who has a serious disagreement with his father. He leaves home after speaking harshly and unkindly to him. In leaving home, he breaks the bonds of love and affection that give strength and purpose to his life. When he leaves in anger, something happens to the son that changes everything. He cannot simply forget the quarrel, but over and over he must prove to himself that he was in the right and that his father was in the wrong. The son broods, because there is an emptiness in him that all his arguments with himself cannot fill. Then one day he receives a letter from his father. The father says that the boy is forgiven and that he should return home. Upon reading the letter, the son forgets his sadness and is filled with joy. Now he can return home. He feels human again as the hope of forgiveness frees him from his frozen anger.

However, as he begins to pack, he also begins to worry. Did the father mean that he had actually forgiven the son, or was he only saying that he might forgive him? He doesn't know whether he dares to believe in the forgiveness. In those moments when he does dare to believe in his father's mercy, he is filled with strength. He feels himself to be healed. On the other hand, sometimes he doubts, and, then, not daring to trust the father, he must trust himself. He decides that he will not go home to be humiliated. He thinks that he had better live his own life, that he can be just as good a man without the father's help as with it. He will make his own way in the world. He will be a good man, just and honest, without leaning on his father. More and more, as he becomes uncertain about his father, he is driven to trust himself. Soon, if the doubt continues, he begins to believe that he is quite an ethical person and has no need of his father.

But, on the other hand, if faith wins out, he stops talking so much about what he must do. When he considers the fact that his father really loves him, then he knows that he is healed, that he can go about his daily work, doing what is necessary, without the constant effort to convince himself that it is possible to do it all alone.

Paul thinks about man's relationship to God in this fashion. God's love is real, and it alone gives man his health, his true relation to the power that keeps his life going. The man who lives in faith knows that the love of his Heavenly Father sustains him. He does not spend his time talking about what he can do. Simply

and spontaneously, he does what the Father requires of him. He does it because he has gone home, has dared to trust God, and has relied upon him.

So, Paul, when he does begin to talk about man's responsibilities, speaks very simply. He does not give a long list of principles or an elaborate code of ethics.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12: 1.)

The ethic of the Christian life is found in the free response to "the mercies of God." God has been merciful, and our good works are in response to what he has done for us. Christians do not do good works in response to the good will of men. That is, we are not good because it will make others think more highly of us. Nor do we do good works because we are trying to convince ourselves of something. We are not responding to *ourselves* but to the living God. We live by faith, in the knowledge that our lives are an answer to the God whose power is present in our lives. We are responding to "the mercies of God," not only when we pray but in every moment of our lives. Our personalities can reflect this trust, even when we are not thinking about God. When we are busy in our work, when we are away from home, even when we are unconscious of our relationship, we are still living by faith and trust.

Paul beseeches us, in response to the mercies of God, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." We do not sacrifice some small part of our selves. We do not imagine that God requires a *portion* of our wealth, or a few moments of our time. We present our bodies—all that we are and all that we can ever hope to be. We have no ears for voices other than our Father's Word. Evil words may be spoken, but our ears do not receive them, because faith helps us to be innocent again, simple children of our Heavenly Father.

We might think of what this means in relation to a small child. A child knows who his father is. He recognizes his father's voice. The voice of his father is unlike any other voice just because it is the voice of his father. The child is not misled by a stranger. He knows who his father is, and he listens to him in a way that he cannot listen to a stranger. If the child is lost and there are many people and many voices around him, he is helpless and fearful and confused by all the voices. But if he should just hear one voice, that of his father, he is filled with relief and joy. That voice he recognizes, and he knows that he is safe again. So, too, the Christian may hear many voices, but when he is wholly devoted to God, the only voice that leads him is the voice of his Father.

This analogy reminds us of Jesus' words in *John, ch. 10*, about the sheep who know the shepherd's voice. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. . . . The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them,

and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." (*Vs. 2-5.*) He who has presented his body "a living sacrifice" recognizes the Shepherd's voice and follows it because he knows he lives by the will, that is, by the mercies, of God.

Members of the Body of Christ

Paul recognizes that there are dangers in the Church. The Church can easily become a human institution instead of a living witness to the resurrection. Sometimes men cease to live by faith and become busy with the machinery of the Church. Men may lose the knowledge of God's redemptive power (even though they talk about it frequently). When this happens, faith becomes a deadly habit instead of a daily adventure. Then the Church ceases to be the Church of the living God and becomes "conformed to this world." Men begin to quarrel over their place in the Church. They become envious of one another; so the Church, instead of living by grace, becomes a competitive society. Paul feels that it is necessary to speak to those who have lost their faith in this fashion:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (*V. 3.*)

When divisions occur in the Church, then the Church is no longer living by the grace of God. It is understandable that men shall live for themselves and their own advancement *in the world*. In the world this is all that they have to live for. But in the Church men have something else for which to live—a Lord who is the King of each man's life. Having a Lord means that we are free from the necessity of being a lord to ourselves. Having a Lord means that we can forget ourselves and our ambitions. Being a servant of Christ means that it is not necessary for any believer "to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." In the Church we become "members in one body," servants of one another. In the Church we are asked to lose ourselves for one another. Since it is God whom we serve and since we know that all gifts come from God, we cannot be jealous of one another. We are glad for the opportunity of humility, for thus do we testify that we belong to Christ who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (*Phil. 2: 7*).

In the life of the Church as Paul has thus defined it, the exercise of any talent must be done in humility and not in arrogance. Especially those who occupy high places in the Church must show that they are free from any feelings of superiority. We can best see what this means by realizing that a minister is never higher than the people whom he serves. In himself he is nothing. The only justification for his position is that he is a servant of the living God and the people whom God

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. What does Paul mean by "the mercies of God"? How does the fact that God has bestowed these mercies affect our daily conduct?

2. Why is it necessary to see the ethical teachings of *Rom., chs. 12 to 16*, in terms of all that Paul has said in the first eleven chapters? Is it dangerous to consider Christian ethics apart from their theological foundations?

has called. This is true of every member of the *faithful* Church. It is a society whose only purpose is to give each of us the opportunity of serving the others.

Love Fulfills the Law

When man lives in response to "the mercies of God," he does not need to live by a complicated set of rules. All of the Commandments are comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (*Rom. 13: 9.*)

In these words Paul is stating the central voice of the Bible as it has been expressed not only by Jesus (*Mark 12: 29-31*) but also in the Old Testament (*Deut. 5: 17-21*). This is no new commandment, but one that is written in the heart of God's revelation of himself. More than this he had not asked. Man, however, is always asking more than God requires. We saw in Lesson 3 how Israel had added very complicated requirements to God's law. We also know how the Church is always tempted to add to God's law. Paul, however, emphasizes the simple and single requirement that was the core of the teachings of Jesus—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Paul tells his readers that they shall "owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Love and love alone is what we owe one another. We are not asked merely to tolerate one another. In a certain sense we cannot say that God requires that we even respect one another. What he requires is much more demanding than respect; it is love. We cannot stop along the way and believe that it is enough either to ignore or to be indifferent to our brother. We cannot use a set of laws as if fulfillment came through anything short of love. Jesus reminds us that it is not enough to refrain from committing adultery. "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (*Matt. 5: 28.*) We can never satisfy ourselves with a law that limits our obligation. We may stop only with absolute love, for "love is the fulfilling of the law" (*Rom. 13: 10*).

Thus does Paul remind his readers of what it means to live by "the mercies of God." The love that God reveals in his Son opens our hearts, so that we too are free to love others as God has loved us.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

Read *Rom.*, chs. 12 to 14; 15: 13.

This lesson is based particularly on *ch. 13: 1-7*.

THE Church, in its earliest days, did not have much political interest. If we go back to the teachings of Jesus, we see a minimum of reference to the Roman Government, which had been ruling Palestine since B.C. Jesus himself seemed to give his whole attention to a different world from that of politics. He was concerned with the Kingdom of God and not with the various kingdoms of men. One can find no teaching of Jesus that would indicate that he had taken any side in the great political questions of his day. We do know that he antagonized the Herodians, who were the supporters of the Roman Government. In an attempt to embarrass him, they had asked him whether men should pay tribute to Caesar. Jesus answered by saying that men should "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (*Mark 12: 17*). Nor did Jesus support any of the politically revolutionary groups such as the Zealots, who were dedicated to the overthrow of Roman rule. We know that some of his disciples may have been political revolutionaries. This seems to have been true in the cases of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They, we are told, came to him and asked whether they might sit on his right and his left hand when he came into his glory. He repudiated this idea of a political kingdom that would have, as they seemed to see it, prime ministers and commanders-in-chief.

We know, too, that, like the early disciples, many of the later Christians did not quite understand Jesus' view of a Kingdom not of this world. They were continually absorbing the anti-Roman revolutionary feeling that belonged, naturally enough, to the Jews. As we shall see, the members of the church at Rome to whom Paul was writing misunderstood Jesus on these matters.

At the time when Paul wrote the letter to the members of the church in Rome (about A.D. 58), there were peaceable relations between the Roman Government and the small Christian sect. This was so especially because Christianity was small and of no great political consequence. However, in a few years the Christian faith was to be forbidden, and in the year 64 a fire, which burned part of the city of Rome, was, by the government officials, blamed on the Christians. That this could be done shows that the peace that existed was no real peace. Trouble was in the air, and feelings of discontent were circulated in the churches. The question the Christians of the Early Church had to solve was what was God's will for them as they re-

lated themselves to a pagan government. Should they support it, and, if they did, weren't they really supporting the sins of Rome? Should they ignore the government and go their own way as much as possible? This was difficult because of the problem of paying taxes. Should they become defiant and proclaim to the Roman Government that it was idolatrous and therefore condemned of God? This latter view was taken by the writer of the book of Revelation. These vexing questions indicate the kind of problem that Paul tried to answer in the verses that are our particular study today.

God and Politics

To some modern readers it will seem that Paul has mixed religion with politics in this lesson to an extreme degree. He seems to be using the gospel to support the Roman Government. Some would argue that Paul should be more neutral. He is anything but neutral when he says:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (*Rom. 13: 1*.)

According to Paul, no government comes into existence unless it has the support of God. Paul has considerable authority for this point of view. The men of the Old Testament had always recognized that God's power was not limited to what we ordinarily call the religious sphere. From the very beginning, it was believed that Israel became a nation and a state because God had given it the power so to do. The Israelite was incapable of thinking that God operated in a political vacuum. Furthermore, the prophets had recognized that the authority by which God governed history was not limited to a Hebrew government. Isaiah knew that little Judah could not control all the states in Palestine. He therefore accepted the principle that the Assyrian Empire should control Palestine. Jeremiah, at a later time, faced a similar problem and decided, to the irritation of his countrymen, that the Babylonians were God's instruments in bringing order into Palestine. In effect, he said the same of the Babylonians that Paul is saying of Rome.

The Limitations in Paul's View

Fortunately, Paul would never expect us to take him literally. Let us therefore look at some of the limitations in his position in order that we may get to the truth behind it. In the first place, Paul is speaking as a human being with limited political knowledge. He doesn't distinguish between good and bad governments for the simple reason that he has known only

one government (Rome), and as governments go that happened to be a good one. If Paul had been living in a more evil age, he might not have been so optimistic about the government's being necessarily ordained of God. If he had written perhaps twenty years later, when Rome persecuted the Christians, he might have, like the author of the book of Revelation, concluded that Rome was a symbol of pure idolatry. If Paul had lived under an impossible government like Hitler's, he might have had to allow more room for changing the state from an evil one to a relatively good one.

We must also take into consideration the fact that Rome governed the whole world. There were no other choices in Paul's time. In other periods of history men have had to choose between two or more conflicting governments. If *all* powers are ordained of God, then this would also be true of revolutionary powers that are just coming into being. How would one choose between an old government that was dying and a new one that had not yet been born? Men had the difficult choice to make during the American Revolution. Which of the powers was ordained of God? Paul knew only one power, and that was Rome.

Paul, also, because of the special situation of Rome, seems to allow very little responsibility for the Christian to assist in the government.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. (V. 5.)

When Paul uses the word "subject," he is thinking in terms of the Roman Government, the only government he knew. One could not use the word in a democracy where we really are not politically *subject*, since we are all politically *responsible* for the health of the state. Paul's language (although he himself was a free citizen) apparently comes closer to serfdom than it does to a political democracy.

A Theological View of the State

However, Paul is speaking not only because of his partiality to Rome, but also because of his Biblical principles. Paul is trying to think out the implications of the resurrection. He is impressed by the fact that the Christian lives in the age of the Spirit. God's power is now redeeming history. The one thing that Paul knows is that God, through Christ, has created a spiritual revolution that has changed the course of history. The whole mission of his life is to preach so that men *by faith* shall see the renewal that comes with God's love. The time has now come in which we acknowledge that God has done what we cannot do. This is not the time to try to redeem history ourselves. This is not the time to take a quick glimpse of God's action and then hurry off to busy ourselves with our own revolution.

Humanity now lives in the age of the Spirit. Previously (before the resurrection), men had lived in the age of sin. Then they had been busy building their kingdoms. Now, in the fullness of time, political busyness must cease. This is the time of the divine revolu-

tion. Men who are aware of God's revolution do not busy themselves, *as if nothing had really happened*, with their own political schemes. Paul, rightly, sees that all revolutions (American, French, Russian, Chinese), although sometimes necessary, are spiritually dangerous. The revolutionist comes too close to being a god. He takes power and uses it to mold the future as *he* wants it. The revolutionist sets himself apart from other weak mortals who must put up with governments that limit them. The power of the revolutionist is so great that he has little sense of his own limitations. The man who does not know Christ can play this role more easily than the Christian. The Christian has too great a sense of sin to trust himself so completely with other people's lives.

What does the age of the Spirit demand? What is required for those who live by faith? It does not demand a great heroic act in the usual sense of the word. The logic of the age of the Spirit is quite the opposite. Those who take God's mercy seriously cannot at the same time take their own power and virtue seriously enough to impose it upon others. The age of the Spirit is not the time to do big things, to be big heroes, to make big plans. This is not the time to be big, but the time to *stop* being big.

God has only one word to say to those of us who are busy with our own plans. The first obligation of the Church was to *listen*. The story that best illustrates this need for listening, rather than busying oneself, is told in the account of the transfiguration:

"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth could white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him." (*Mark 9:2-7.*)

We can notice in this story that the first thing that occurs to Peter is that he ought to do something. God has transfigured Jesus, and Peter thinks that he ought to get busy too. He wants to build some tents for the distinguished visitors. However, this is beside the point. He is supposed to see and give his heart to what is happening, not to go running around looking for canvas and tent pegs. So the Voice from heaven tells Peter what it must tell every man: "This is my beloved Son: hear him." It isn't possible to *hear* Jesus and to plan revolution at the same time. We, as believers, do not, like the revolutionist, seek for power as the world knows it.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Rom. 13: 7.)

With Is Not License

We have noted in previous lessons Paul's rejection of the law as a way of life. He, however, would not think that the repudiation of the law means that we can do as we please. "Is the law sin? God forbid." (Ch. 7: 7.) Being a Christian means that we substitute the inner discipline of the spirit for the outer conformity to the law. The freedom of faith does not permit license.

However, in every revolution a great deal of license does occur. In political revolutions, as the older order breaks down and before the new order has established its authority, men steal and loot and even settle old scores by killing their neighbors. If this happens in a human revolution, it is likely to happen on a larger scale in the divine revolution. Since God sets his spirit in history, some believers are tempted to feel that this means that they are free from all the normal controls of life. They need no longer pay taxes. (Paul disagrees.) They do not have to support the political government in time of peril. They see themselves as free from all responsibilities to the State and to ordinary life. They are, they think, now responsible only to God. Paul will have none of this nonsense. The

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. What are some of the implications of Paul's statement, "The powers that be are ordained of God?" Does this mean we should be content with a corrupt *status quo*? When is revolt against the powers justified?

2. If Paul had been living in a time of intense persecution of the Christians by Rome, what do you think his attitude toward the State would have been?

3. How does the State serve God? What is a Christian's obligation when he feels the State is disobeying rather than serving God?

age of the Spirit is not a time for doing as we please. It is the age of an even greater discipline.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. (Ch. 13: 5.)

Paul is anxious that the Christian recognize that his great responsibility to God will be fulfilled in a *normal* manner. It is in ordinary and everyday existence that we reflect the love of God. Our function is not to take the place of those who are now ruling, but to serve them in such a way that they, too, will serve the God who gives us our strength and our meaning.

13

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS NEIGHBORS

Read Rom., chs. 12 to 14; 15: 13.

This lesson is based particularly on chs. 14: 13-23; 15: 1-7.

WHAT difference does it make whether or not we live by faith? Furthermore, how does the grace of God affect my personal existence? Does it really matter? Will it benefit my neighbor if I live by "the mercies of God"? Paul wants these questions answered. He is not interested in a theoretical Christianity. He believes, and he tries to show us in these verses, that we can *live* together just because we have *believed* together. Paul concerns himself now with one of the most difficult problems that the Church (or any group) has ever faced. How is it possible to have unity with people whose experience and point of view is so very different from one's own? It is all very well to speak of loving one another, but how is this possible when it seems so difficult to live together in harmony? Paul recognizes that people are not the same, that they have great differences of personality. He wants to tell his readers in Rome how they can reconcile these dif-

ferences in the Church while each person is loyal to his own point of view.

The Background of the Problem

Paul is speaking to men who are quarreling in the church at Rome. The dispute is one that has been going on in many of the churches scattered throughout the Empire. The argument may not seem to be very important to us, but it was terribly important at the time. Everyone took sides. Opinions were heated, and the disagreements frequently split the church in Rome wide open.

The problem was one that Paul had faced before. The question was, To what degree shall Christians keep the law? They did not mean, of course, the law of the Roman Government. They meant the religious laws that had been inherited from Judaism. The Gentiles had a special privilege, as a result of an edict of the Jerusalem church, which freed them from keeping the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. However, they were required to keep a few essential laws. These laws are described for us in Acts 15: 28, 29: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon

you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye *abstain from meats offered to idols*, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well." It was, however, not so easy to abstain from meat offered to idols. Almost all butcher shops in the Gentile cities were either connected with the pagan temples or received some of their meat from those temples. It was difficult and sometimes impossible to purchase meat that had not been consecrated to a pagan god. The law, therefore, that required men to abstain from such meat was not an easily enforceable law. In time it disappeared. However, during Paul's ministry it was a great problem. Some people must have thought that the observance of this law was silly. They may even have appealed to Paul's criticism of the law. Was not the gospel a gospel of freedom? Had it not redeemed men from the curse of arbitrary law? Men needed meat, and if they could get only pagan meat, then that was what they must eat. It involved no spiritual sin on their part, since they did not believe in the pagan gods anyway.

There were others, however, who took the Jerusalem edict seriously. Since they were required not to eat polluted meat, they would not. These people felt themselves to be honest and law-abiding. As long as the law was on the books, even though it may have been a little impractical, they would not eat the meat. Some of them probably were genuinely bothered because the meat had been offered to the pagan gods. It was distasteful to them, and they preferred to give up meat entirely rather than abuse their religious feelings. Many of these people solved the problem by becoming vegetarians. This was the controversy which was weakening the Church and to which Paul felt obligated to give an answer.

The Unity of Faith

Paul begins by appealing to both sides of the argument.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. (Rom. 14: 13.)

The harmony of the Church, the love of the fellowship, has been broken by criticism and counter-criticism. Before an answer can be found to the question of the meat, the Church must unite its heart. As long as there are bad feelings over the theological issue, there can be no answer. Neither of the positions is sinful in itself. Sin is found in the judgments and criticisms that are directed against fellow members of the Church. Paul hopes that the disputants will recognize that the health of the Church of Jesus Christ comes before the question of what men shall or shall not eat.

Paul would not be surprised to discover that the Church frequently tends to split itself over unimportant issues. The modern Church, with all its tragic

divisions, is often divided over many trivial issues. Christians have parted in anger over the way in which the Bible should be interpreted (this in spite of the fact that both parties take the Bible seriously). Factions in the Church have grown cold with disgust for one another over the question of the proper method of observing the sacraments. Groups within churches have even torn the body of Christ apart over such an absurd issue as whether or not the choir should be robed. Men can grow very sinful over what is unimportant. To his readers and to us, Paul addresses these words which should help to bring us to our senses: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more."

The Freedom of the Gospel

Next, Paul speaks to that faction in the Church which has insisted that it is sinful to eat the forbidden meat.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (V. 14.)

Paul has been preaching the gospel of freedom too long to succumb to any party that is trying to make the law absolute again. He detects self-righteousness among those who have been opposing the eating of meat. How can they be that sure of themselves? If all of their devotion is going into this law about the meat, how much of their devotion is left for the Lord Jesus?

Jesus had said that "ye cannot serve God and mammon." According to Paul, mammon could very well be religious legalism. Paul has no sympathy for an idea that takes the place of loyalty to God. Furthermore, he knows that whenever men place even a religious law above God, then it is inevitable that love will be lost.

He tells the stiff-necked members of the congregation that they have no right to judge other people. As to questionable meats, Paul says that nothing our brother eats is unclean in itself, but is unclean only to him who thinks it so. It would be a sin for a man to eat the meat if he honestly believed that it was unclean because of its previous consecration to an idol. It would not, however, be unclean to him who did not believe it to be unclean. Those who eat the meat in freedom should not be judged. Nor should anyone put a stumbling block in his brother's way by telling him that he is sinning. The gospel gives him the right to eat if it is not injurious to his faith as *he* sees it. Those who eat the meat have a right to respect their own decisions in this matter.

Paul is writing freedom into the charter of the Church. It is an easily forgotten quality, once the Church becomes dominated by strong opinions. Paul recognizes that people are not going to think exactly alike on the question of Sabbath observance. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike." Such a difference of opinion is not necessarily sinful. It can become sinful

however, when one party judges the other. There are some who, perhaps because of their temperament, are inclined to think of the Sabbath as a day of absolute rest. There are others who cannot help believing that it requires no more of us on one day than on any other day. These people believe that every day should be lived to the glory of God. Both have a right to their opinions, and no man can judge the other's method of worshiping God. It would be very helpful if each of us who read Paul would think on this passage. How often have we judged our neighbor because he chose to express his loyalty to God in a different way from that in which we express it?

The Discipline of Faith

Paul has also a word to say to those who are so interested in freedom for themselves that they are indifferent to the problems of their neighbors. Although it is true that "there is nothing unclean of itself," it is also true that we should not give our brother an occasion for stumbling.

If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. (V. 15.)

The Christian in Rome who feels free to eat meat also has an obligation to the feelings of his neighbor who is bothered by the meat. Those who believe in freedom have no right to *parade* their freedom.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. (V. 21.)

Christians, with a strong sense of their individual rights, have no right to put their *desires* over the *responsibilities* of brotherhood. There are people who derive a satisfaction out of being different. They enjoy locking people who are bound to set laws. From Paul's point of view it is not necessarily wrong to drink wine. He would say that if drinking wine does not interfere with man's loyalty to Christ, then he may drink it. He may not, however, insist upon his *absolute* right to drink wine. Only Christ is absolute. Neither drinking wine nor not drinking wine can take the place of the Lord Jesus. He who feels free to drink wine should not, however, drink it in such a way that it is a problem to his brother in Christ. He cannot make an issue of it. For the love of Christ each of us should be willing to sacrifice what we sometimes believe to be our rights. If your faith is strong enough so that wine is no problem for you, then be thankful to God. Do not insist that everyone admire a strength that comes from God in the first place.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. (V. 22.)

Clearly Paul believes that our rights as individuals are both protected and limited by being members of the body of Christ. If we love Christ, we must, out of respect for our brother, be sometimes willing to put our rights aside. "We then that are strong ought to

What to Look for in This Lesson

1. Though Paul is dealing here with certain specific problems of conduct, he is really laying down some general principles that can govern our action under any circumstance. What are these principles?

2. What are the real sins that Paul is condemning in the Scripture lesson?

3. Do we abuse our Christian freedom when we disregard the needs of a weaker brother?

4. What is the real nature of Christian unity and fellowship?

bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

To the Glory of God

Paul observes the stubborn persistence of sin in the Church. Self-righteousness lays hold of men as they begin to think more highly of their viewpoints than they ought to think. Paul recognizes and is not disturbed by the fact that as long as there are different people in the Church, there will be different points of view.

Differences of opinion belong to the life of the Church. God does not make us carbon copies of each other. The grace of God is important just because God makes it possible for people quite different in temperament and thought to love and respect one another. God has united us

that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ch. 15: 6.)

The work and the labor to which we have been called by God waits. God's call does not last forever. There are hungry mouths to be fed, the sick are to be visited, and the naked are to be clothed. There are millions of men and women bound up in the sickness of their own solitude. These people who have need of God cannot wait forever while we fight among ourselves as to whether anyone has a right to eat meat or drink wine. God has not given his Son unto the death of the cross in order that we might force our brother to behave exactly as we behave. God has revealed his love for the healing of the nations. This is our task, and in it God is glorified. He who lives by faith in the risen Lord and not by faith in his own way of life understands the unity of the Christian fellowship. To us has been given the privilege of serving one another. Nothing that we think or desire for ourselves is more important than the love of Christ. Because this love is our greatest treasure, we are willing, by the grace of God, to sacrifice ourselves in order that it may be realized.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. (V. 7.)

BOOK REVIEWS

Fun with the Family

Games for Boys and Girls, by E. O. Harbin. (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. 160 pages. Paper, \$1.35; cloth, \$2.00.)

When a new book of games appears with E. O. Harbin's name attached, you may be sure it's worth investigating. Here are several hundred answers to the question, "What shall we play?" Apparently Mr. Harbin was answering that question with juniors and junior highs primarily in mind, but you adults, young and older, will find lots of fun here. I guarantee you'll discover some of the old-timers you haven't thought of for years, maybe dressed up in a modern outfit, but the same old favorites. Here and there will be ideas for adapting games to particular occasions, making them your own, —a typical Harbin touch to inspire creativity.

There are games for the home, the playroom, the out of doors, including general games, tag games, relays by the dozens, ball games galore, games for which you make your own equipment. Directions are simply and clearly written, and a helpful notation indicates how many players are needed.

The gay illustrations by Karl J. Murr add much to the fun of reading as well as to the clarity of the descriptions.—*Margaret S. Crofoot.*

The Older Years

The Best Is Yet to Be, by Paul B. Maves. (The Westminster Press. 96 pages. \$1.50.)

Here is a book that is long overdue. It is intended to be helpful to the older people of our society. As the title implies, the author believes that in the stewardship of life the latter years can be most happy and productive.

He helps the reader to face such problems of maturity as retirement, use of leisure time, acceptance of dependency, the making of new friends, and the facing of bereavement. The treatment is practical, helpful, and spiritual.

It is worth-while reading for young and old alike. It will prove invaluable to the pastor who seeks to minister adequately to the whole congregation.—*Kenneth C. Stewart.*

YOUR SCRIPTURE STUDY FOR THE WEEK (Home Daily Bible Readings)

1. "Lights in the World"

March 31—*John 15: 1-9*
April 1—*Acts 2: 14, 22, 23, 37-47*
April 2—*Acts 8: 25-40*
April 3—*Acts 18: 24-28*
April 4—*II Tim. 4: 6-8, 19*
April 5—*Philemon 1-3, 23-25*
April 6—*Rev. 7: 9-17*

2. Thomas and the Risen Lord

April 7—*Mark 16: 1-11*
April 8—*Luke 24: 13-27*
April 9—*Luke 24: 36-43*
April 10—*John 20: 24-29*
April 11—*John 21: 1-8*
April 12—*Acts 3: 12-19*
April 13—*Acts 4: 8-13*

3. Jesus and the Law

April 14—*Jer. 31: 31-34*
April 15—*Ps. 119: 145-152*
April 16—*John 13: 34, 35*
April 17—*Eph. 3: 14-21*
April 18—*Ps. 19: 7-11*
April 19—*Ps. 119: 97-104*
April 20—*Rom. 8: 1-10*

4. No Other Gods

April 21—*Ps. 119: 169-176*
April 22—*Isa. 6: 1-9*
April 23—*John 4: 20-24*
April 24—*Luke 12: 22-31*
April 25—*John 16: 1-7*
April 26—*John 17: 1-10*
April 27—*Ps. 25*

5. Profane Living

April 28—*Matt. 23: 16-22*
April 29—*James 1: 19-27*
April 30—*James 3: 2-12*
May 1—*James 5: 12*
May 2—*Luke 4: 1-12*
May 3—*Matt. 21: 12-17*
May 4—*Isa. 1: 10-18*

6. The Day of Rest and Gladness

May 5—*Deut. 5: 12-15*
May 6—*Neh. 13: 15-22*
May 7—*Jer. 17: 24-27*
May 8—*Mark 2: 23 to 3: 6*
May 9—*Luke 13: 10-17*
May 10—*Isa. 58: 13, 14*
May 11—*Ps. 84: 1-4*

7. God and the Family

May 12—*Col. 3: 12-21*
May 13—*I Tim. 5: 1-4*
May 14—*Prov. 1: 7-16*
May 15—*I Chron. 29: 16-19*

May 16—*Eph. 6: 1-4*
May 17—*John 19: 25-27*
May 18—*Mark 1: 29-31*

8. God's Estimate of Human Life

May 19—*Matt. 18: 10-14*
May 20—*Gen. 4: 6-15*
May 21—*Ps. 8*
May 22—*James 4: 1-10*
May 23—*Luke 9: 51-56*
May 24—*John 15: 12-17*
May 25—*I John 3: 7-15*

9. The Meaning of Marriage and Divorce

May 26—*Prov. 4: 20-27*
May 27—*Mark 10: 2-12*
May 28—*Prov. 2: 10-22*
May 29—*I Cor. 13: 1-8*
May 30—*Ps. 78: 1-8*
May 31—*Eph. 5: 25-33*
June 1—*Eph. 6: 10-20*

10. Persons and Property

June 2—*Lev. 19: 11-16*
June 3—*I Sam. 12: 1-5*
June 4—*Lev. 19: 33-37*
June 5—*Prov. 2: 6-9*
June 6—*Ps. 49: 1-9*
June 7—*Prov. 11: 1-8*
June 8—*Luke 19: 1-9*

11. The Obligation to Be Truthful

June 9—*Ex. 20: 16; 23: 1*
June 10—*Deut. 19: 16-21*
June 11—*Acts 5: 1-11*
June 12—*Prov. 6: 16-19*
June 13—*I Kings 22: 18-28*
June 14—*John 8: 42-47*
June 15—*Eph. 4: 25-32*

12. The Sin of Coveting

June 16—*Jer. 17: 9-11*
June 17—*I Tim. 6: 6-10*
June 18—*Luke 18: 18-27*
June 19—*Matt. 26: 14-16*
June 20—*Prov. 11: 23-31*
June 21—*I Kings 21: 1-7*
June 22—*II Cor. 9: 6-11*

13. Christ's New Commandment

June 23—*Matt. 22: 34-40*
June 24—*John 14: 15, 21-24*
June 25—*I John 4: 7-15*
June 26—*Prov. 25: 21, 22*
June 27—*Gal. 5: 13-15*
June 28—*Ex. 23: 4-9*
June 29—*Rom. 5: 1-8*



THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS
FOR CHRISTIAN TEACHING

Uniform Series

Theme: JESUS AND THE PEOPLE (Continued)

Early Followers of Jesus

NOTE: *The first two lessons this quarter complete the study of Jesus and his followers which we began in January.*

Lesson 1—"LIGHTS IN THE WORLD"

(A Fellowship of Many Followers)

THOSE who fly at night are familiar with beacon lights. Their flashing fingers continually probe the darkness, warning the pilot and guiding the flight. Flying high, as planes usually do, it is impossible for the passengers to determine where a particular beacon comes from. It may be a tower light high up in the mountains. It may be installed on top of a sheet-iron shed out in the plains. The important thing about any beacon light is not its eminence but its function. It does not matter where it is as long as it lights the way.

The early Christians were like that. The apostle Paul called them "lights in the world." We have no more idea where some of them came from than we have of the beacon lights we may have seen from the window of our plane at night. In *Rom., ch. 16*, Paul sends greetings to twenty-seven friends, by name, of whom we know almost nothing—people like Priscilla and Aquila, a wife and husband who had done heroic service of some sort on behalf of Paul; Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, and Apelles, of whom we've lost all trace. He mentions still others in his letter to the Colossians (*ch. 4:7-18*). But quite evidently they performed the service that lights are supposed to perform. Wherever they were, they showed the way—the Christian Way.

In today's lesson we want to emphasize that each of these unknowns, as well as the other followers about whom we have been learning in this series, had something that made his life luminous wherever he was. The printed passages suggest what this something was. Let us look at these passages with the question in our minds, What made the early Christians "lights"?

Vine and Branches Entwined

The answer to this question is suggested by the parable of the Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-10*). A vital relationship existed between the disciples and Christ. Their reason for living and the spirit of their lives were derived from him. They were lights in the world because they tried to reflect the One who was the Light. That was their distinguishing feature.

One way to explore this relationship

¹ From *The Gospel of St. John*, by Marcus Dods, in *The Expositor's Bible*, edited by R. R. Nicoll. Used by permission of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

of the first followers to the Lord is to try to discover what it meant to them. What did these key words in John's Gospel mean: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (*John 15:5*, R.S.V.)? The first thing we may suppose they meant was that they needed Christ and Christ needed them; they were interdependent. The allegory itself suggests this. "The vine can bear no fruit if it has no branches; the branches cannot live apart from the vine. Without the branches the stem is a fruitless pole; without the stem the branches wither and die. Stem and

branches together constitute one fruit-bearing tree."¹ (Marcus Dods.)

The early Christians were conscious of the fact that if Christ's work was to be carried on, they would have to do it. They were responsible for continuing what their Lord had begun; henceforth, he would work through them.

But they were acutely aware that they could do the work only to the extent that they lived *in* Christ. That is; they must continue to believe in him, to make him the standard of their thought and conduct, to trust him to forgive and strengthen them. No one can continue to bear the fruits of Christian living if he lives without conscious attachment to Christ, even though there are many moderns who believe that this is possible.

E. Stanley Jones tells of a trailing vine that worked its way across the prayer knoll at Sat Tal in the Himalayas. One morning he discovered that the vine had reached an outer branch of a tree around which it entwined. That night a storm struck the prayer knoll. Next morning Dr. Jones found the vine on the ground, the broken branch still in its grip. The tree was still standing, but the vine had fastened upon a dead branch of the tree that could not withstand the storm. "Had the vine reached the central trunk, no storm could have torn it away or broken the trunk."

This lesson was written by ROBERT H. BONTIUS, of the Department of Religion, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio.

Though this incident reverses the figures of Jesus' parable, it nevertheless points up the fact that many people in our day are depending upon dead branches for their spiritual support. They have seized upon some abstract ethical principle or fastened upon an institution; or they cling to a particular pattern of life that has been satisfactory so far. They are likely to find such branches giving way in the storms of circumstance that sweep in upon even the most sheltered life.

The answer is not to become independent of all support. That is simply impossible. Whatever we are is the product of interaction with forces not of our making. The need for interdependence is recognized today as never before. But there are wise and unwise interdependencies, and each must find for himself a relationship with God, who alone creates and supports our lives.

A Common Life

A second thing that attachment to Christ meant to the first Christians was that the divine life which was in him could vitalize their own. That is

characteristic of organically related parts: the vine and its living branches always partake of a common life.

In cynical times like these we are tempted to doubt that we can be filled with Christ's Spirit. The emphasis is upon man's limitations, man's weaknesses, not to mention man's egotism. It requires more faith than we can easily muster to believe that human life can be the channel of divine activity.

The Early Church lived in a corrupt society, but its members found that it was possible to bear fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal. 5: 22, 23, R.S.V.*). Indeed, the apostle Paul declared dramatically that the purpose of "being given up to death for Jesus' sake," was "that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (*II Cor. 4: 11, R.S.V.*).

But this depends upon attachment to the vine. Life flows from the vine into the branches. If a branch is somehow cut off, it is good for nothing but the fire (*John 15: 6*), for it dies.

The manner in which men become

branches is not indicated in the allegory. The disciples were already branches; so there was no need to explain. However, we find the clue in the figure itself. It suggests that this vital relationship is formed by grafting. It does not do merely to tie a branch to a vine. If it is to be fruitful, it must be cut through, so that the vessels that carry the sap are exposed. Similarly, the stock must be cut. Then the sap vessels of the branch and the sap vessels of the stock are brought into contact. "Such must be our grafting into Christ. It must be a laying bare of our inmost nature to his inmost nature, so that a vital connection may be formed between these two. What we expect to receive by being connected with Christ is the very Spirit which made him what he was. We expect to receive into the source of conduct in us all that was the source of conduct in him. We wish to be in such a connection with him that his principles, sentiments, and aims shall become ours."¹ (Marcus Dods.)

Reason for Living

A third meaning that this relationship of Christians to Christ had for the Early Church was this. It meant they had a definite reason for living. They had to "bear much fruit"; the task of followers of Christ is to live productively.

The product for which God looks is of course, love. That much is crystal clear in the passage which states that to abide in Christ means to abide in love. The exhortation is, "Abide in my love" (*John 15: 9, R.S.V.*). Just what this means has never been easy to define. It can be illustrated by pointing to the life and death of our Lord. Herein was love. It can be described in the words of the apostle Paul in *I Cor., ch. 13*. There has never been a description to equal it. In a recent book, *Christian Love*, Paul E. Johnson has endeavored to define it as a "growing interest in, appreciation of, and responsibility for every person as a member of one family of God." This is a good sentence to memorize for it puts into modern language the overarching reason for Christian living: to build up the common life that all men are meant to have in Christ. Any light that modern disciples shed upon the world's dark way will be the light of this kind of love, the reflection of the divine Spirit, who so loves the world that he gave his only Son

The Scripture Lesson for April 6

Scripture: *John 15: 5-9; Phil. 2: 12-17; Rom., ch. 16; Col. 4: 7-18*

The Printed Text: *John 15: 5-9; Phil. 2: 12-17*

The Golden Text: "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."—*John 15: 8.*

(Revised Standard Version)

John 15: 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love."

* * * *

Phil. 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

To be sure, the task of illuminating the ordinary situations of common life with love is exceedingly difficult. What bearing the fruits of the Spirit means in terms of the home or the office situation requires the keenest kind of dedicated analysis. But the difficulty of the task does not alter the fact that it is God's intention for us. "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." (*John 15: 8, R.S.V.*)

Lights in the World"

Clearly this conception of their relationship to Christ called upon the best efforts of those first Christians. The second assigned Scripture passage for today indicates how Paul felt about it. "If you are to be 'lights in the world,'" he wrote to the Philippians, "you must 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure'" (*Phil. 2: 12, 13, R.S.V.*) Work, in this context, means to put forth every ef-

fort. The achievement of the aim for which God, the Vineyard-Keeper, has planted us is partly up to us. Paul never neatly divided man's part from God's, as this passage shows. But it is clear that we have a part in our salvation so important that it ought to excite anxious concern lest we fail to perform it. Paul's idea of the way God works in us to move us spiritually was not one that paralyzed the nerve of human action. On the contrary, it was a trumpet call to take up arms against the sin that does so easily beset us.

But what is the essence of the work that we on our part must do? It consists of furthering among men this vital relationship with Christ. The word Paul uses here is obedience. Our effort is to consist in the work of knowing Christ better, loving him more, endeavoring to do his will, as far as it is revealed to us. Our work is "holding fast the word of life" (*Phil. 2: 16, R.S.V.*). In doing this, we experience the fact that God is at work in us, both intending and effecting the life of love. (*V. 13.*)

Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways is Christ dependent upon us? In what specific ways do we need to depend upon him?
2. Can you name other "dead branches" on which people depend for spiritual guidance and support besides those mentioned?
3. Do you agree with Marcus Dods' statement that as Christians we expect to receive "the very Spirit which made him what he was"? What are some of the factors in our life today that discourage such optimism?
4. How would you define the love in which Christ bids us abide? What do you think of Dr. Johnson's definition?

Lesson 2—THOMAS AND THE RISEN LORD

EASTER is a dismal day for doubters. If one is honest in his observance of the day, he goes to the sanctuary to praise God for the rising of Jesus from the dead. His hymns, his prayers, his conduct—all speak with one voice of the joy that belongs to the believer in the resurrection.

The skeptic, the doubter, cannot know this joy, for the resurrection is the great wall that he cannot scale in his disbelief. It is his mental Matterhorn—the fact about Jesus Christ that defies the conquest of reason or proof. Either he believes it or one doesn't; and the man who cannot believe beholds Easter festivities with defiance, with wistfulness, or with a curse upon his lips at hypocrites who have not battled to make this faith their own.

It would be unrealistic to imagine that every Easter worshiper realizes what he has confessed when he has donned spring clothes and joined the multitudes that crowd the churches on this day. Undoubtedly the motives are mixed, and many of the congregation may themselves be doubters who have come with their fingers crossed (or perhaps have come hoping something will happen to enable them to go over from unbelief to faith this morning).

The apostle Thomas is the symbol of all doubters. It is therefore appropriate that his story should be studied on Easter, for the resurrection is the event about which men mark themselves as believers or as those who doubt.

The Case for Doubt

It is well to remind ourselves at the beginning that there is a case to be made for honest doubt. All of us have known people who, in what they did not believe, showed more courage and integrity than many who have accepted the creeds unthinkingly and

without letting them affect their living in any way. Arthur Hallam was such a person, and the poet Tennyson had him in mind when he wrote:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Thomas the disciple was one of these honest doubters, and Jesus chose him to be one of the Twelve. It takes courage to be constantly questioning what other people accept as true; the doubter is often unpopular, often a

gadfly as he causes other men to examine their judgments and opinions. It is always easier to fall in with the common opinion than to stand out against it. But note that it is the doubter who says, when Jesus is about to go where his enemies await him, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (*John 11: 16¹*). The courage to doubt leads in his case to the courage of loyalty when it is needed the most.

But there is more to be said for doubt than that. *Doubt is the essential characteristic of the Protestant thinker.* The Protestant in his dependence upon God is always skeptical about the works and ways of men. Even in his study of the Word of God he is a questioner. He reads a familiar passage and questions all previous understanding of it he has ever had in order that God may speak some new word to him from it. He is always on guard against any assurance that he has the final, ultimate view of any matter. He knows that it is God who directs his study and his thoughts; therefore, he must have a healthy skepticism about any idea, for it may be of men and not of God.

¹All quotations in this study section are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Lessons 2 and 3 were written by GEORGE L. HUNT.

Paul Tillich, contemporary American theologian, has expressed this viewpoint very forcibly in his book, *The Protestant Era*. He makes a comparison between our doubt and our knowledge of our sin. It is when we realize the true nature of our sin that we are most ready for salvation; if we did not know we had sinned, we would feel no need of a Saviour. Likewise when we doubt, it is because we are seeking the truth. The deeper and more sincere our doubt, the closer we are to the truth we are seeking, namely God. God can save the man who has carried his doubts to their ultimate conclusion, for that man is so low in his doubts that no one but God can restore him. He is at the point where he learns that "you cannot reach God by the work of right thinking or by a sacrifice of the intellect or by a submission to strange authorities, such as

the doctrines of the Church and the Bible. You cannot, and you are not even asked to try it. Neither works of piety nor works of morality nor works of the intellect establish unity with God."² The sincere doubter, in other words, reaches the point where he believes nothing he can do can lead him to truth. At that point God steps into the picture and meets his need.

It may be that Thomas was in this position on that first Easter Day. The other disciples exclaimed to him, "We have seen the Lord," but their words and their experience could not convince Thomas. He had to experience the thing for himself before he could believe. And so Thomas went through that awful week living outside an atmosphere he could not honestly share. Everyone was deliriously happy; he was not. Was he tempted at any time to surrender his skepticism, to say that

he believed when he did not, just in order to get into the inner circle again? No, for eight days later we find him still unconvinced, waiting in the upper room for something to happen, but having no assurance that it would take place. But as events proved, he was never closer to God than in that moment of his deepest doubt. God appeared, and Thomas saw for himself. His week of terrible suffering and the worst kind of loneliness—feeling cut off from God—was rewarded with a special revelation of the risen Christ.

So there is a case to be made for honest doubt. The trouble with most doubt is that it is superficial and childish. It is not doubt that is entered into in order that the doubter might find God and hear his word. It is more often doubt derived from human arrogance and pretense. It is usually pride and it often issues in self-righteousness.

Doubting the Resurrection

The resurrection is the focal point around which men fight the battles of faith and doubt. The fact of the resurrection, and the present experience of the living Christ, cannot be proved or known by any stretch of the mind or the imagination; therefore, men to whom he is not known cannot believe in the event by which he conquered death and became alive forevermore. This knowledge is a gift of God, not a work of man; but it is not arbitrarily withheld from anyone. Christ longs to make himself known. It is man who refuses to receive the gift and so condemns himself to unsatisfied doubt.

Why do we refuse the gift of the living Christ, which God so freely and willingly offers to us? The reasons vary with the individual. Some doubt the resurrection because it is intellectually hard to hold. It is an event outside the normal areas of experience; and since it cannot be comprehended by the mind, it therefore cannot be true or real. Some people may be quite honest in their intellectual doubt; for many, however, it is a matter of pride. The resurrection comes along as something man cannot grasp or comprehend by the use of human power; therefore, he is offended at this challenge to his resources.

The intellectual difficulties of the Christian faith have been emphasized

The Scripture Lesson for April 13

Scripture: *John 11: 14-16; 14: 1-6; 20: 24-29* (printed in full)

The Golden Text: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."*—John 20: 29.*

(Revised Standard Version)

John 11: 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

* * * * *

Ch. 14: 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

* * * * *

Ch. 20: 24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

² From *The Protestant Era*, by Paul Tillich. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

st acutely in the past hundred years
 cause of the tremendous advances
 modern science. But men have
 struggled with the problem posed by
 resurrection from the very begin-
 ing of the Christian era. The book of
 the Acts tells us that when Paul
 preached the resurrection at Athens,
 some mocked; and others said, "We
 will hear thee again of this matter"
 (Acts 17: 32). *I Corinthians, ch. 15,*
 a lengthy argument for the resurrec-
 tion, aimed at some who were stirring
 doubts about the matter in the
 Corinthian church. The earliest here-
 sies against which the Church con-
 tended centered in the matter of the
 divine versus the human nature of
 Jesus, and the resurrection was at the
 forefront of the problem. The debate
 will always go on. We shall never have
 relief from it in this world, for men
 will resist the fact that here is knowl-
 edge that can be known only as a gift
 from God. They will try in vain to ac-
 quire it by their own power, and
 they will not receive it.

Another reason for doubt of the
 resurrection is a moral one. Some of
 us do not want to accept the implica-
 tions of knowing Christ as a living
 Person, for as a living person today he
 exercises the same ministry he per-
 formed on earth. He comforts, but he
 also judges us. A living God who did
 nothing but comfort us would be very
 welcome. We would gladly accept his
 ministrations to our egos and our vani-
 ties. But a living God who constantly
 stands in judgment upon our selfish-
 ness, who demands more of us than
 we care to give him—such a God we
 resist and deny. Hugh Martin, writing
 of Augustine before his conversion,
 says: "He discovered that he had
 seriously misunderstood the real na-
 ture of the Christian faith and was
 obliged to recognize that like many
 another he had exaggerated his intel-
 lectual difficulties in order to evade its
 moral challenge."

Believing the Resurrection

The resurrection is the bedrock fact
 of the Christian faith. Deny it, and
 you have an adulterated creed that is
 not Christianity.

We must believe that Christ con-
 quered death, or else death still holds
 the terrors of the unknown for us. We
 must believe that his resurrection sig-
 nified the victory of God over Satan,

⁸ From *These Found the Way*, edited by
 David Wesley Soper. The Westminster Press.
 Copyright, 1951, by W. L. Jenkins.

Questions for Discussion

1. What part does doubt play in the experience of the Protestant Church?
2. Why do men resist receiving the resurrection as a gift from God?
3. What is "the power of his resurrection"? What are the evidences for its existence in the world today?

else we are still sinners with no hope
 of salvation. We must believe that his
 death made possible eternal fellow-
 ship with God and that in his resur-
 rection he has come back from death
 to "receive you unto myself" (*John*
14: 3), as he promised. We must be-
 lieve that his resurrection gives us
 eternity, for "if in this life only we
 have hope in Christ, we are of all men
 most miserable" (*I Cor. 15: 19*).
 Christ is a living Person; without this
 faith in his personal reality, all talk
 about "the power of his resurrection"
 is just idle chatter. Yet we know that
 power; therefore, we know it is alive
 forevermore.

An interesting book describing how
 thirteen people "found the way" to
 faith in the living Christ has been
 published during the past year and is
 a "Book for Christian Study" this
 quarter. (See page 76.) It is called
These Found the Way. The story of
 Joy Davidman is the first one in the
 book.

Joy Davidman was born of Jewish
 parents, but they had not followed the
 faith of their fathers. She was reared
 as an atheist. Her father gave her the
 ethics of Judaism without the theol-
 ogy—"rather as if he had kept the top
 floor of our house but torn down first
 floor and foundation."⁸ When she
 grew up, her search for a faith led her
 to Communism, but she never had any
 great enthusiasm for it. She married,
 had two children, but still had no con-
 victions worth clinging to. Then one
 day her husband called from his New
 York office to say that he was having a
 nervous breakdown. He felt his mind
 was going; he couldn't stay where he
 was, and he couldn't bring himself to
 come home. Then he hung up. Let Joy
 Davidman tell what happened next:

"There followed a day of frantic
 and vain telephoning. By nightfall
 there was nothing left to do but wait
 and see if he turned up, alive or dead.
 I put the babies to sleep and waited.
 For the first time in my life I felt
 helpless; for the first time my pride
 was forced to admit that I was not,
 after all, 'the master of my fate' and
 'the captain of my soul.' All my de-
 fences—the walls of arrogance and

cocksureness and self-love behind
 which I had hid from God—went
 down momentarily. And God came in.

"How can one describe the direct
 perception of God? It is infinite,
 unique; there are no words, there are
 no comparisons. Can one scoop up the
 sea in a teacup? Those who have
 known God will understand me; the
 others, I find, can neither listen nor
 understand. There was a Person with
 me in the room, directly present to my
 consciousness—a Person so real that
 all my previous life was by compari-
 son mere shadow play. And I myself
 was more alive than I had ever been;
 it was like waking from sleep. So in-
 tense a life cannot be endured for long
 by flesh and blood; we must ordinarily
 take our life watered down, diluted as
 it were, by time and space and matter.
 My perception of God lasted perhaps
 half a minute.

"In that time, however, many things
 happened. I forgave some of my ene-
 mies. I understood that God had al-
 ways been there, and that, since child-
 hood, I had been pouring half my
 energy into the task of keeping him
 out. I saw myself as I really was, with
 dismay and repentance; and, seeing,
 I changed. I have been turning into a
 different person since that half minute,
 everyone tells me."⁸

The experience of Thomas is re-
 peated in our day. The living Lord
 comes to doubters or to people of
 faith and bestows the gift of his pres-
 ence. The wounds are visible to eyes
 of faith, but we need not touch them.
 It is enough to fall in worship and
 adoration, exclaiming, "My Lord and
 my God."

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
 He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking
 me;
 It was not I that found, O Saviour true;
 No, I was found of Thee.

... ..
 I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
 Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
 For Thou wert long before-hand with
 my soul,
 Always Thou lovedst me.

—Anonymous.

Theme: JESUS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments and Teachings of Jesus

*"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets:
I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

—Matt. 5: 17.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another."

—John 15: 12.

Lesson 3—JESUS AND THE LAW

IN THE book, *The Wall*, John Hersey's novel of life among the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto in 1939-1943, there is a touching scene where the rabbi of the group buries his Torah in the cemetery. It was "a parchment scroll, about eighteen inches high, wound around two exquisitely carved ivory handles, with the Five Books handwritten in a firm, clear Hebrew script and illuminated at the chapter endings with dainty, cabalistic symbols." His reverence for this book of the Hebrew law leads him to take great risk to himself and others in order that the book might be saved if he should die. (See the picture on page 35.)

The Jewish people have always been what another character in this novel calls "the Book People." Their law has been to them more than a code of ethics or a national constitution. It has been the symbol of what makes them a unique group in human society, a set-apart, chosen nation that must never lose its distinct identity.

During the next eleven weeks we shall be studying the Hebrew law as it is expressed in the Ten Commandments. We shall be studying these Commandments, however, not as Hebrews who reverence the book in which they are written, but as people who worship the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word whose speaking gives meaning to the law for us. The Christian has a special relationship to the Hebrew law; we shall seek to learn what that relationship is.

Our first lesson in this series will deal with our Christian relationship to the law as a whole. Subsequent lessons will take the individual laws and interpret them in the light of the Person and teaching of Jesus Christ.

The Ten Commandments

When the Jew of Jesus' day spoke of the law, he meant several different things. There was the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, known as the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue. There were the ceremonial laws that applied to ritual and worship (they are in several Old Testament books, particularly Deuteronomy and Leviticus). Then there were the interpretations and the amplifying of the Decalogue, later to be more fully developed and written down in the Talmud. It is not necessary for our lesson to consider the ceremonial laws, but we must try to understand what the Decalogue and its amplifications meant to Jesus' countrymen.

The Ten Commandments marked the setting apart of the Hebrew people

for a special destiny in the plan of God. They became the sign, the symbol, of their covenant relationship with him. God promised a blessing to Abraham and his descendants, protected them in time of famine by sending them to Egypt, then under Moses called them out of Egypt to dwell, eventually, in the Promised Land. The God who "brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," was he who was giving them this law to be the thing that would unify them and make them a people with a common allegiance to the covenant God. On their part they promised to abide by the law: to have no other gods before the Lord, to deny themselves graven images, to keep the Sabbath holy, and so forth.

The Commandments were therefore not considered a heavy burden im-

posed upon an unwilling people by stern and relentless God. They were accepted by the Hebrews as the wise counsel of a gracious God, as the law by which they would carry out God's will among men. Of course they disobeyed the law—they were a rebellious people all through their history. But they never denied that the law was right and that it was God's true and holy will for his people. They sang their devotion to it in psalm like this one, the words of which were more than rhetoric:

"O how love I thy law!

It is my meditation all the day. . .

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet;

And a light unto my path."

—Ps. 119: 97, 105

Expanding the Law

After the Children of Israel had returned to Jerusalem following their captivity in Babylon, Ezra, one of their leaders, set about to make great reforms in the national and personal life of the people. A return to the law, a strict compliance with its regulations, and careful instruction in its meaning became the means by which these reforms were to be accomplished.

This plan led to developing the office of the scribe as a man whose whole time would be spent studying, interpreting, and applying the law. In the Apocrypha, one of these scribes, Sirach, describes his vocation in these words:

"He searches out the hidden meaning of proverbs,

And acquaints himself with the obscurities of figures.

He will serve among great men,

and appear before rulers. . . .
 He will devote himself to going early
 to the Lord his Maker,
 and will make his entreaty before
 the Most High.
 He will open his mouth in prayer,
 and make intreaty for his sins.
 If the great Lord pleases,
 he will be filled with the spirit of
 understanding,
 and will pour out his wise sayings,
 and give thanks to the Lord in
 prayer."
 —The Wisdom of Sirach 39: 3-6.¹

The intent of the scribes was commendable in purpose: they wanted to apply the law of God to every relationship of life. Therefore, they felt they had to be specific. What did it mean, for example, to do no work on the Sabbath Day? The Mishnah—the code of the scribal laws—devoted two books to a minute definition of what constitutes work, dividing it into thirty-nine categories. Then they stated emphatically what could or could not be done on the Sabbath Day. And these commands were given the weight of inspired law. It was said that God whispered them in the ear of Moses on Mt. Sinai and that they were passed on orally until the scribes put them in the code.

The scribes and the Pharisees were the defenders of this interpreted law. They made the keeping of these laws the test of a man's righteousness. Since the Pharisees kept them with meticulous care, they considered themselves the most righteous people living in Palestine. Their indignation at the blind man shows how secure they felt in their own righteousness: "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" (John 9: 34).

Jesus and the Law

Naturally our Lord, when he came to the scene, roundly condemned the perversion that had changed God's gracious law into the legalism demanded by the scribes and Pharisees. Throughout the Gospels we hear him speaking of this matter in no uncertain terms. Luke 11: 37-44 is one instance of his forceful condemnation of the Pharisees; words like these of the legalists to plot his crucifixion.

From *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, edited by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Published, 1939. Printed by permission of The University of Chicago Press.



The tablet of the Commandments is a sacred symbol to the Jew. But what does the law mean to us who are Christians? This is the subject of our study for the next eleven weeks.

This drawing is a woodcut by Fritz Eichenberg. It is from the book, *What the Jews Believe*, by Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein (Farrar, Straus and Young), which is an excellent summary of the faith of modern Judaism.

But Jesus did not despise his Father's law as it was set forth in the Commandments of Sinai. He came, he said, not to annul the ancient law but to "fulfil" it, to carry it to its completion. What did he mean by this statement?

For one thing, he came to show that righteousness went beyond the outward keeping of any law, even any of the Commandments. It penetrated to the thoughts, the will, the intention of a man. It is applied to the inmost life of a single individual, so that a murderous thought is equivalent to an act of murder, a lustful desire is as bad as committing adultery.

Clearly, here we are beyond legalism, beyond law. So the law is fulfilled in Christ as, by the extreme nature of his demands, he leads us beyond the keeping of outward com-

mandments to the control of our motives and our desires.

Another way in which Christ fulfilled the law was by showing, in word and action, that the law could be summarized in two commandments: love God, and love your neighbor. (Matt. 22: 37-40.) In John he said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another" (John 15: 12). These commands did not supplant the Decalogue; they expressed the spirit behind the keeping of each Commandment. No Commandment is really observed if it is not observed in love.

A third way in which Christ fulfilled the law was to be in himself its fulfillment. He himself was the living embodiment of the Beatitudes and all the rest of his teachings. He showed that perfect love of God which is required of us; he displayed that per-

fect love for the neighbor which we are expected to show.

But he was in himself greater than any law. He was the Lord of the law, for he was, as God, the proclaimer of the law. His words in *Matt. 5: 21-48* are spoken with authority: "It was said . . . but I say unto you." He was Lord of the Sabbath laws: he had the right to interpret them as he did, for as God, he had made the laws. His incisive interpretations were not the rationalizing or meditating of the scribes. They were the voice of God himself. So, in this sense also, he fulfilled the law, giving them the valid meaning that God had always intended they should have.

Our Relationship to the Law

As we come to consider what the law must mean to us, we may have the uneasy feeling that we have sometimes been like the scribes and the Pharisees in our attempts to legislate morality. Like them, our intention is admirable. We want to see the application of the gospel to our daily liv-

ing. But, like them, we let the keeping of the law become the end in itself rather than a means of practicing righteousness. Like them, we begin to feel that righteousness is a matter of doing certain things rather than a gift of grace. Like them, we judge a man's religion by the way he has kept certain laws that we consider binding. The will of men is substituted for the will of God.

But our right relationship to the law of God grows out of our relationship to Jesus Christ. Because we believe in him and follow his commandment of love, we are bound to practice those things required in the Decalogue. The law becomes for us what it was for Israel: the description of the way God's people will live. The laws are not to be understood "as the demand for a particular morality or for exceptional achievements of some kind or another in relation to our fellow men. Christianity is not morality. We are not intended to be benefactors or instructors, much less gods to one another. We are not doing anything

special when we love one another. In doing this we are simply doing the one thing most natural for those chosen and saved in Jesus Christ, we are simply doing the one thing necessary, which we as brothers owe one another, because we owe it to Jesus Christ. In doing this we are simply being obedient."²

But we recognize how we fail in our obedience. The law serves as a guide to show us our weakness and our failures. It leads us to cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and to answer our own question, "We are incapable in our human strength." So the law throws us upon the grace of God in Christ. He gives us the power to be what otherwise we could not be. What righteousness we attain is not our doing: it is God's gracious work in our lives; therefore, the temptation to find salvation through our good works (and so to be self-righteous) is taken away; we have no good work to boast of, for it is God who has made us able to obey and endure.

Yet our obedience at its best never fulfills the law of God. So how can we be justified in God's sight? Left to our own devices, we could not be. But there is One who has fulfilled all the law: Jesus Christ. He will therefore take our place, do for us what we can not do, represent us before God. And as we receive him into our lives, we shall be made righteous before God.

Let us very briefly apply this to one of the laws, "Thou shalt not kill." As Jesus taught it, it includes harboring murderous thoughts. Which one of us has not done this at one time or another? Even after we became Christians, we have failed at this point. We pray for grace to resist this temptation, and it is given us. But in an unguarded moment we fail again. We are in despair. How shall we ever conquer this evil in us? And if we do not conquer it, how can God save us? He cannot change his Commandment and it looks as if we will not let him change us. We are lost! But no, God has one more thing he can do: he can have mercy on us. By minimizing the law or by excusing our weakness? No!—by fulfilling the law himself. He will send one Person who will be perfect. That Person will take our place before God, and God will accept him in our stead.

² From *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, by Karl Barth. Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by permission.

The Scripture Lesson for April 20

Scripture: *Matt. 5: 17-20; Mark 10: 17-22; Luke 16: 16, 17; John 1: 17*

The Printed Text: *Matt. 5: 17-20; Mark 10: 17-22*

The Golden Text: "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."—*John 1: 17*.

(Revised Standard Version)

Matt. 5: 17. "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

* * * * *

Mark 10: 17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " ²⁰ And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." ²¹ And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

Does that make an easy "out" for
Hardly. For when Christ does this
ing in our behalf, it is on the con-
on that we accept him as our
mour, Lord, and King. And when
accept him sincerely in this way,
law of love becomes binding on us.
his love is unlimited in its demands.
is not easy to be a neighbor (*Luke*
37) or to love God as we ought to
love him. But this is the burden we

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between "legalism" (as taught by the scribes) and the law of God? What examples of legalism are in the Church today (both Roman Catholic and Protestant)?
2. Someone has called Christianity "an ethic without rules." What does this mean? Is it true?
3. How do the Commandments help us to understand Christian love?

accept joyfully, obediently, in grati-
tude because it is laid upon us by the

One whose love is greater than ours
can ever be.

Lesson 4—NO OTHER GODS

(*Supreme Loyalty to God*)

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This command, uttered on Mt. Sinai to a chosen people, is echoed by its leaders throughout its long and varied history. A poet-king repeats it: "For all the gods of the people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens." A prophet proclaims it, speaking for the Lord: "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord." We are accustomed to praise Israel as the first people to practice monotheism, the worship of one God. Some scholars, it is true, point to concepts of monotheism before the days of Moses. But in Israel monotheism reached a level that distinguishes it from other forms. Its central place in the faith of Israel and its lofty ethical fervor make it unique among the religions of the world. Israel's whole life is bound up with its worship of the one God, the Lord God Jehovah.

Other Gods

From ancient times to the present men have challenged the absolute claim of one God upon the loyalties of men. Israel's contemporaries knew no such restraint in their worship. They borrowed and exchanged gods among themselves to suit their convenience. For example, in Egypt, Canaanite gods had been introduced into the Egyptian pantheon, and Baal, Ashtoreth, and others were worshiped along with Egyptian deities. Among the tribes surrounding Israel the exchange of gods was a common practice. Even in modern times this practice is not uncommon. A Buddhist temple in China may house Taoist, Buddhist, and even Hindu deities. To the dismay of Christians, and rightly so, Jesus Christ has often been placed among the lohans (Buddhist saints) and Bodhisattvas (Buddhist divinities) in at least one Buddhist temple. As a matter of fact, the Protestant church in America has dedicated a chapel to all religions, thereby laying the Christian Church open to the danger of an interchange of gods. Within the walls of this chapel are statues of Mohammed, Buddha, Lao-tse, Confucius, Moses,

Jesus, and a host of other religious leaders.

But God is asking complete loyalty, undivided allegiance, from the Hebrews and from those of us who have inherited their tradition. From the time of Sinai on, the sin of Israel would be described in most vivid and forceful terms as the sin of a divided loyalty, of sharing gods and of following after other gods, of idolatry. Throughout their history the most distinctive characteristic of the Hebrew people was their struggle with the temptation to serve other gods along with Jehovah. The fact that enough of them were able to resist the temptation and to worship no god except Jehovah set the Israelites apart from all other tribes and nations and made them the world's most significant spiritual force previous to the time of Christ.

As already indicated, the issue is not dead. One of the cults that flourishes in America is Baháism, an importation from India, whose main tenet is that it combines in one faith the best of all religions. Such tolerance may make this cult, with its temple in Wilmette, Illinois, attractive to many shallow-thinking people. Who has not heard someone in the church say: "Why take Christianity to the Moslem countries? Their religion suits

them." It is hard to reconcile this attitude with the terms of the First Commandment. And in foreign countries the missionary must valiantly resist the temptation to incorporate into Christianity the most attractive features of the religion in the land where he is at work.

The Covenant and the Law

What gave Israel its unique sense of a special relationship to God? It was its sense of history, its conviction that God had moved in its life in a particular way and for a particular purpose. The Children of Israel believed that God and God only delivered them from Egypt, "out of the house of bondage." By the sole act of God, without merit, work, or power of the Israelites themselves, the Children of Israel were set free. God did this because he had chosen them, an insignificant tribe, to be his people and to carry out his purpose. From that time forth he would care for them, lead them, and make of them a great nation, which would be a blessing to all nations. The Israelites were required to do one thing: obey God.

A covenant relationship was thus established whereby the Lord God Jehovah was to be Israel's supreme Ruler. The Israelites, on the other hand, pledged their undivided loyalty to him and agreed to live by obedience, offering unto God faithful devotion.

The Danger of Idolatry

The First Commandment is illuminated and reinforced by the Second: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." This command helps define the character of God and the proper way to worship him.

What is idolatry? The principle of

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idolatry consists in man's attempts to deliver himself through his own creations. On one tragic occasion the Israelites made a golden calf and bowed down and worshiped the thing that they had created with their own hands. They prayed to it for deliverance. Thus their worship was a kind of worship of self. Man had assumed the position of creator and deliverer, which is in direct contradiction to the First Commandment that insists on God's sovereignty and man's obedience to him.

Do we worship golden images today? Do we attempt to deliver ourselves, creating false saviors by our own hands and bowing before them with the cry, "Save us"?

We do. We may, for example, make an idol of science and technology. In a recent book, *Science Is a Sacred Cow*, the author, Anthony Standen, himself a scientist, describes the idolatrous worship of this new deity. He refers to the scientist as the high

priest of our age, his priestly garment, the laboratory robe; his sacred Scriptures, the infallible word of science.

As primitive man struggled for existence, he tried to control the forces of nature and to bring them into a harmonious relationship that would be favorable to his own welfare. In an effort to create order and to remove the hardships and insecurities of existence, man worshiped the sun-god, the storm-god, the gods of flood, pestilence, and drought, to placate them and persuade them to do his bidding.

It would now seem that modern man can accomplish what primitive man attempted to bring about through his superstitious methods. For the first time in the history of the world we seem to have in our grasp the power to eliminate poverty, disease, fear, and even drought. With our modern rain makers, medicine men, and diviners, the vicious forces of nature that try to destroy man come under our control. The thought is even ex-

pressed that man will someday control his greatest enemy, death. How great are man's achievements! He can deliver himself through his creation science. This has been made an idol, a golden image. But rather than bow down and worship it, let us give thanks to God for the gift of science which he has created, and say: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and science showeth his handiwork." (1) We might accept Oliver Wendell Holmes's gratitude for science, expressed thus: "Science is a good piece of furniture for a man to have in an upper chamber, provided he has common sense on the ground floor."

Another idol of growing significance is that is gathering to itself more and more devotees is the new and glamorous god that might be called "The American Way of Life."

In these days when science the savior is revealing its ruthless nature and becoming the destroyer god, we are seeking a god of high idealism, genuinely merciful and humanitarian; a god, who will promote harmony throughout the world and instill hope into the hearts of peoples. We seek these virtues embodied in the American nation. The words of Walt Whitman take on religious significance and become our prayer:

"Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy
Of value is thy freight, ..."

Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the Western continent alone,

With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or swim with thee,

Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port triumphant."¹

What begins as wholesome and commendatory patriotism may drift into idolatry if we make our corporate selves into the great deliverer and forget the God who has delivered us out of the house of bondage.

The exaltation of a nation to the place of a god is very familiar, for we have tragically encountered this golden image in such movements as Fascism, Nazism, and Shinto, and we cannot imagine ourselves falling into this monstrous form of idolatry.

This danger, however, will always

¹ From "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood," in *Leaves of Grass*. Copyright, 1924, by Doubleday & Company, Inc. Used by permission.

The Scripture Lesson for April 27

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 1-6; Luke 14: 16-20, 25-27; 16: 13-15*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 1-6; Luke 14: 25-27; 16: 13-15*

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image."—*Ex. 20: 3, 4.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: *5* thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, *6* and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

(Revised Standard Version)

Luke 14: 25 Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, *26* "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. *27* Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

* * * * *

Ch. 16: 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. *15* But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

present in our nation as long as clinging to the conviction that we have the absolute solution, that our ways of doing things, our concept of democracy, free enterprise, and individual liberty, are absolute values that are grounded in the heart of the universe. When this conviction is accompanied by a faith in man's goodness and greatness apart from God, danger becomes very real and terrifying idol is near completion. If the American man is without a sense of the inner tragedy of sin, if he thinks he has in his hands the solution for the world, then he will say, "Let nothing stand in my way, for I have the answer."

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Israel's faith in one God account for its survival as a nation?
2. How does Christ carry forward the teaching of the First Commandment? (See *Luke 16: 13-15.*)
3. Is science itself at fault for becoming the object of our worship, or is it man's abuse of science that is to blame? How widespread is man's idolatrous faith in science?
4. Is Whitman expressing an unchristian viewpoint in the poem quoted in this lesson? If America is to be a world leader, how can it assume this position in humility and without arrogance?

To worship God rightly, we must cast aside our man-made idols, and the first step in this process is to confess that we cannot save ourselves. "Noth-

ing in our hands we bring." We can turn only to the cross, confess our sins, raise our prayer of praise and thanksgiving, and then do God's will.

Lesson 5—PROFANE LIVING

(Warning Against Profane Living)

MEN always need something to worship. It may be a temple, a god, a family altar, or even a slab of stone, as in the Kaaba of the sacred city of Mecca. If devotion is not directed toward a religious object or deity, other things, such as the nation, the party, the lodge, may be substituted. Concepts and ideals, such as liberty and socialism, have their passionate and zealous devotees. These objects and ideas which are held in reverence are of primary importance in molding society and in determining the vitality and quality of a community.

Last week we saw that these things, made by man's hands or conceived by intellect, become idols if worshiped in actual religious rites or held in such esteem that they are looked upon as absolute. And no one dares to take them lightly. Anyone who does so is immediately accused of being profane, for he stands "outside the temple" and not within the gates of the sacred. Indeed, tragic injustices are inflicted upon "profane" people. Socrates refused to reverence the Athenian gods in a proper manner; so he was classed among the profane. Christian martyrs were called atheists and profane people because they failed to bow down before the image of the emperor. In like manner, in some countries today, men who speak and act scornfully toward the nation, the party, democratic ideals, or even the Church, may be judged profane.

Profane living or contempt for the holy is the problem faced in the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Thou shalt not profane him, hold him in contempt, be irreverent toward him. In this Commandment we have a high concept of reverence toward the holy. But the Hebrew people did not worship a visible thing of nature, such as a sacred cow or a heavenly body. They did not express reverent respect for a concept, such as reason or philosophy. The object of their worship was a person, the transcendent and living God, who is the Creator of all things.

Promises in His Name

Thus, in the eyes of the Hebrew, a profane man was one who acted with irreverence toward the living God. It is natural that the keeping or breaking of an oath made in the name of God came to determine whether or not a man was sincere, reverent, and faithful to his Creator. The Hebrew nation lived "under God," and a promise made in his name took on

because a falsehood was involved, but because the lie was committed in the name of God.

The binding oath was central in Israel's community life. This Third Commandment laid the foundation for the trustful human relationships with God on which the nation was built. God had placed upon the Israelites a responsibility for fulfilling their promises. The Third Commandment, with the significance it laid upon the sacred vow, shows the place God had in the social, political, and legal systems of the Hebrews.

There were other ways than by the breaking of an oath made in his name by which the Israelites profaned the holiness of God. The priests profaned his holy name through lack of enthusiasm and joy in making offerings to him, through performing the sacrifices in a routine manner. (*Mal. 1: 12.*) Immorality and unclean living on the part of the priests showed that they forgot they were to "be holy unto their God, and not profane [his] name" (*Lev. 21: 6*; see also *Jer. 23: 10, 11*). "From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. . . . They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord." (*Jer. 23: 15, 16.*) The common man profaned God's name in worshipping idols, so that God was forced to utter this condemnation: "Because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name" (*Lev. 20: 3*).

binding significance. On solemn and serious occasions Hebrew people called on God to witness to the sincerity of their promises, using such phrases as, "The Lord do so to me and more also," or "As the Lord liveth." The man who carelessly and insincerely used God's name in an oath or made vain and empty promises in the name of the Almighty was committing an irreverent act toward God. To lie under oath was a monstrous sin, not chiefly

Thus did the Hebrew show contempt for the sacred. The question for us at this point is: How do we in our time defile the holy? How does the man of the twentieth century show indifference and irreverence to God and thus break the Third Commandment?

Profane Speech

The first evidence of disobedience to this Commandment that we think of is profane language. We have been too willing, however, to make this sin the sole way of breaking the Commandment, forgetting that there are more serious and subtle ways of being profane. The profuse swearer does openly what many do quietly and in a more damaging manner. The blasphemer reduces sacred objects to trifles. By making God's name unimportant he raises himself to a place of greater significance. Thus profanity arises not only from a limited vocabulary, but also from the very human desire to glorify oneself through ridiculing the sacred.

In China, for example, God's name is never used in swearing. Why? The

reason is simple and obvious. The gods of China are not held in great reverence. They do not represent supreme authority, majestic glory, or holy love. Infinitely more sacred than the gods are the ancestral shrines, for the family clan is the center and soul of Chinese life. For this reason, all forms of profanity are attacks upon the family, the most sacred symbol of China's civilization. Swearing takes the form of a series of outbursts in the name of ancestors.

Profane Living

The Third Commandment, however, is broken in a much more subtle and irreverent way than by the use of profane language. This is done by those who accept a completely secular philosophy of life. It is true that these do not vocally take the name of God in vain, but by exalting man's achievements they relegate God to a place of mythical interest.

Modern man, in complete contradiction to Israel's faith, holds the conviction that he is capable of constructing a moral and ethical society without God. Mutual trust, honest

work, confidence in one another, an integrity in government are not dependent upon devotion, fear, and reverence toward God. Our trouble says modern man, is the result of ignorance, evil environment, and the lack of security and democratic principles. We are living in an age that has endeavored to remove God from the throne of our nation's life and free ourselves from the religious spirit of our Protestant culture. The American citizen, who owes his political and intellectual freedom to the Christian faith, but who says proudly, "My religion is humanity," or "My religion is democracy," is a profane man. He is like Esau, whose writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to as "profane," for Esau disregarded his birthright and carelessly sold it for a mess of pottage. Secularism is a denial that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." It is a denial of God's providence, of his redemptive acts in history, and of his gracious gifts to man. To live by such a philosophy is to live profanely.

Profane Hypocrisy

The Third Commandment is broken also by many "good" church people who never utter an oath and whose faithfulness to the church is seldom questioned.

Christians profane God's name by forging it into a superstitious or magical formula. Jesus pointed to this danger when he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." There is a subtle temptation to use God's name for the accomplishment of our own purposes. We say, "Lord, Lord," and faithfully follow the rituals of the Church. We carefully observe the laws; indeed every jot and tittle is rigorously kept. But these acts are done not in the spirit of praise and glory to God, not because we delight in the Lord, not because we are penitent and look to God for forgiveness, but because we think the repetition of God's name and the saying of long prayers will bring happiness to us. In so doing, we take God's name in vain.

Moreover, Christians abuse God's name in their unwillingness to take seriously their promises to God. How often we sing, "O Jesus, I have promised," and then allow indifference and coldness of heart to follow our prom-

The Scripture Lesson for May 4

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 7; Matt. 5: 33-37; 23: 16-22; Mark 7: 5-8; Luke 6: 46; 11: 1-4*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 7; Matt. 5: 33-37; 23: 16-20*

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."—*Ex. 20: 7.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 7 Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

(Revised Standard Version)

Matt. 5: 33 "Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."

* * * * *

Ch. 23: 16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say, 'If any one swears by the altar, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' ¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ So he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it."

We resolve to live courageously
 God, saying, "I will take up my
 and follow thee," but how
 our attention is turned away
 our vow when we proceed to
 God. We glibly confess God as
 Creator of all mankind, saying
 the "hath made of one blood all
 of men for to dwell on all the
 of the earth," but immediately
 draw circles around people and
 them "yellow, black, and
 n." To sing about God's love,
 to deny Christian fellowship to
 people of Africa, India, China,
 the migrant laborers of Mexican
 ent who roam from vegetable
 to vegetable farm in this
 try, is nothing short of denying

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is it a serious matter to take an oath in the name of God? Can an oath made on the Bible in a courtroom have any meaning for an unbeliever?
2. Do you agree that profanity in speech is an expression of the speaker's pride and self-importance?
3. What is "profane living"?

God and of taking his name in vain.

In speaking of the incarnation in her book, *The Man Born to Be King*, Dorothy Sayers writes: "From the beginning of time until now this is the only thing that has ever really happened. When you understand this you will understand all prophecies and all history."¹ How, then, can the

gospel, with its assertion that here is God, here is Truth, here is eternal life, here is victory that overcomes the world—how can this ever become monotonous and dull? Yet we make it that way when we allow the coming of Christ to be a mere fact of history rather than the event that has changed our living and our lives.

Lesson 6—THE DAY OF REST AND GLADNESS

(The Right Use of Sunday)

It is strange that "the day of rest," which was given primarily for the fulfillment of man's needs, became an issue of great controversy between us and the Pharisees. In fact, Sunday observance at various times has been one of the most debatable and controversial points in the life of many Christians. How strange that a Commandment which has had such humanitarian influence upon nations and is a source of joy for the weary laborer and a special day for all should be so misunderstood! For to many who lived in the past it was a burden, and for the Christians of our generation it is an ignored treasure. In order to regain something of the meaning and purpose of the Christian day, let us first consider the origin of the Jewish Sabbath as it is stated in the Fourth Commandment.

Remember

This Commandment does not begin "Thou shalt not," as do most of the other Commandments. The first word is "Remember." The very word suggests the command, suggesting a day of reflection. The word "remember" often reminds us of an experience we do not wish to forget or a gift in which we found pleasure. It is, as it were, an invitation to stop and recall something memorable or pleasant from the past.

Here, too, the word beckons us back to the past and invites us to recall the acts of God. The command gives three reasons for remembering the Sabbath Day:

First, the Fourth Commandment directs man's attention to God the Creator, who, after the Creation, rested from his labors. For six days

God worked in making the "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," forming one great thing after another. On the sixth day he created man. And then, in beautiful simplicity and childlike imagination, the Commandment says that God rested on the seventh day, so that man and he, in communion together, might enjoy and delight in the mysteries and the beauty of this creation which they had found good. Through the centuries the Hebrews not only have found inspiration in pondering on the excellencies of God's creation, but they also have been humbled by the wonders of the universe. Man needs to rest from his labors, that he may ponder on the creative mysteries and the generous extravagancies of God.

Secondly, the Fourth Commandment is rooted in a humanitarian purpose. It is not unusual that a certain day should be set aside. Practically all civilizations have their festival days when an occasion is provided for fun and relaxation. But this

special day of the Hebrews is unique in that it gives recognition to the need of both *work* and *rest* for all—for the rich and the poor, the manservant and the maidservant, the slave and the free, and even the "stranger within thy gates." The Commandment first dignifies labor by making it the duty of all; then it sanctions leisure as a privilege to which all are entitled. A leisure class that lives off the sweat and toil of the poor is not honoring God; nor is the employer who fails to provide a day of rest for his employees. Both are breaking the Sabbath and are guilty before God. Those of us who have been nurtured in a Christian civilization possibly do not appreciate the humanitarian benefits that have stemmed from the Fourth Commandment—sound industry based upon the dignity of labor, and a provision for rest from the toils of labor for all.

Thirdly, in the version of the Commandments given in *Deut. 5:15*, the Children of Israel are told to remember their liberation from Egypt and from their oppressors. The seventh day was set aside not only for rest but also for the celebration of their deliverance from bondage. Hence, the Sabbath was a day of gladness and, in later Jewish literature, was referred to as a bride or a queen who is welcomed with joy.

These ideas which the Jews held concerning the Sabbath are summarized in the liturgical kiddush,

¹From *The Man Born to Be King*, by Dorothy L. Sayers. Copyright 1943 by Dorothy L. Sayers. Published by Harper & Brothers. Used by permission.

which is prescribed for use on Friday evening, when the pious Jew welcomes the gracious coming of the Sabbath. *Genesis 1: 31 to 2: 3* is first recited, and then the following words are repeated:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God,
King of the universe, Creator of
the fruit of the vine.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God,
King of the universe, who hast
sanctified us by Thy command-
ments and hast granted us Thy
favor and given us Thy holy Sab-
bath as an inheritance. It is a
memorial of the creation. It is a
special day, first of the days of
holy assembly, a memorial of the
departure from Egypt. Thou hast

chosen Israel and Thou hast
sanctified us above the peoples
in that with love and favor Thou
hast given us Thy holy Sabbath
as an inheritance. Blessed art
Thou, O Lord, who sanctifiest the
Sabbath Day."

The story is told that on a certain Sabbath Day the Roman Emperor Antoninus dined in the home of Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi. Cold food was set before the emperor. He ate it and remarked on its delicious flavor. At another occasion, on a weekday, the emperor again dined with the patriarch. This time hot steaming food was set before him. The emperor enjoyed the food but remarked that on the previous occasion the food had

been much better. Yehuda Ha-Nasi then said, "The warm food lacks spice," and when asked the name of the spice, he replied, "The Sabbath."

Laws Obscure the Spirit

The essential meaning of the Jewish Sabbath, however, with its message of deliverance and its spirit of joy and gladness, came to be hidden by many foolish restrictions. Forming a code of rules that listed what could or could not be done on the Sabbath changed it from a day of joy into a day of solemn obedience and attention to manifold and severe regulations. The laws choked to death the spirit of the Fourth Commandment.

This unfortunate misinterpretation of the Sabbath is illustrated in the exhaustive list of forbidden work drawn up by the Jews at the time of Jesus. Thirty-nine types of work were listed among which were sifting, washing, making a knot, baking, reaping, writing two letters, lighting a fire, and so forth. Each of these types was further extended and enlarged upon until the whole system of Sabbath law became a burden. This codifying of laws was a very natural thing, for whenever an important Commandment was threatened, it was felt that a regulation should be made to protect the law. The protective covering, however, gradually became so heavy and burdensome that the joyful note in the Commandment was forgotten and lost amidst the accumulation of rules. It is not surprising, then, that there was a time when people ceased to look forward to the coming of the Sabbath. This mood is expressed in the words of a little boy who said:

"I do not love the Sabbath,
The soapsuds and the starch,
The troops of solemn people
Who to Salvation march."
—Robert Graves.

Restoring the Joy

How, then, can the Fourth Commandment be observed and retain its note of joy? How may it become a day of celebration and at the same time a holy day?

The answer may be found only in the manner in which Jesus observed the day. Jesus acted on the principle that "the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath"; that is, whenever a law conflicted with the needs of a man, the law must be cast aside.

The Scripture Lesson for May 11

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 8-11; Mark 2: 23 to 3: 6;
Luke 4: 16; 13: 10-17*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 8-11; Mark 2: 27, 28;
Luke 4: 16; 13: 10-17*

The Golden Text: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."—*Ex. 20: 8.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. *9* Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; *10* but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: *11* for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

(Revised Standard Version)

Mark 2: 27 And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; *28* so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath."

* * * * *

Luke 4: 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read.

* * * * *

Ch. 13: 10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. *11* And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. *12* And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." *13* And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. *14* But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." *15* Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? *16* And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" *17* As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

Concerning this point, however, often arises a misunderstanding. Jesus did not permit a free and selfish observance of the day, even though he altered the Sabbath regulations of the Pharisees to be broken. He did not secularize the day. It remained a holy day, a day for the remembrance of God's work, a day for rest, and a day for worship in the synagogue.

For the Pharisaic rules Jesus substituted the law of love and proclaimed that the Sabbath was an occasion for doing good—for service to one's neighbor. The primary issue that Jesus raised was whether it was right to do good on the Sabbath Day even if the doing of good was in defiance of the Sabbath regulations. In other words, Jesus overcame the laws of the Pharisees with a higher law, the law enshrined in the great commandment, "You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor thyself."

The clearest evidence that the institution of the Sabbath, with all its laws and regulations, must not take itself absolute authority is shown by the fact that for the disciples the Sabbath was changed from the last day of the week to the first. In a single stroke the law was relegated to a place of secondary importance, for there

Questions for Discussion

1. Are the three meanings of the Sabbath Day for the Hebrews equally significant for Christians?
2. How could we make Sunday a day of service in our community?
3. Discuss with the class the proper use of Sunday, since it is the Lord's Day, the day of resurrection.

was revealed to man a fact that is greater than any conceivable law. This was the fact of the resurrection. On the first day of the week we celebrate the greatest act of deliverance that mankind has ever witnessed—the deliverance from sin and death. Hence, we have the Christian Sunday taking the place of the Jewish Sabbath.

The early Christians came together on the first day of every week not because they were under any law; nor did they do it from a sense of duty. They came together as a body of Christ's followers to remember the day when Christ rose from the dead, to offer their prayers of thanksgiving and praise to their risen Lord. It was on this day, too, that the Holy Spirit descended upon them as they were united in prayer. Here was a new creation, the Church, and also the greatest gift of all, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The first day of the week is a day

that God has given for rest, worship, the proclamation of the Gospel, service to our fellow men, and the celebration of God's victory over evil. In our age, when a trip to the country demands merely the effort of getting into an automobile, and entertainment is brought into our very homes simply by turning a dial on television, it is easy to toss aside the great heritage of the Sabbath Day. It grows increasingly easy for us to proceed on our selfish ways without a moment's thought of God or the slightest effort to relieve the pains, fears, and loneliness of others. Ours is a wickedness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. Such a thoughtless and ungrateful refusal of a precious gift labels us as fools.

Blessed is the person who, with lamps filled with oil, waits eagerly for the coming of the Lord's Day, for this is our day of rejoicing, praise, and fellowship one with another.

Lesson 7—GOD AND THE FAMILY

(Conserving the Family Heritage)

Too often we suppose that the Commandment to honor father and mother applies only to the young. We usually assume that this injunction in the Bible teaches that children should love and obey their parents, and that they had better not delay, lest death make it impossible for mother and father to receive the honor and appreciation due them. Moreover, it may be thought that in thus honoring his parents an individual observes a magical formula for a long life, suggested by the words, "that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you" (*Ex. 20: 12*).¹

To understand this Commandment properly, we must learn what the family meant to the Hebrews of the Old Testament. Not only were they a closely knit people, bound to one another by their common descent from Father Abraham; they were also bound to God in a family relationship. In unforgettable words spoke through the prophet Hosea,

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
And called my son out of Egypt."—(*Hos. 11: 1*, K.J.V.).

Father's responsibility in the family, therefore, must be seen in terms of his relationship to God.

Family Religion in Israel.

The chosen people were made up of

From *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, edited by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Published, 1939. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

family units and tribes, not of isolated individuals taken one by one. Through the family an individual shared in the promises of God to Israel. Only on the battlefield was God the Lord of hosts; at home he was a God of households.

Many indications can be cited of

the significance of the family for the ancient Jews. Removing ancient boundaries was severely punished, because landmarks made a family's holding in the community secure. Not even a king like Ahab had any right to deprive the poor man Naboth of his vineyard. This was due not so much to the fact that it was his private possession as to the fact that it had been in his family for generations and was regarded as a guarantee of his family's membership in Israel. Once Jeremiah, during the last siege of Jerusalem, slipped out through the enemy lines to go to his native village and there reclaim his family inheritance. In spite of the fact that Jeremiah predicted the complete destruction of the Kingdom, by this act he showed his ultimate hope for Israel and his desire to participate as a representative of his

Lessons 7 and 8 were written by PAUL RAMSEY, of the Department of Religion, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.

family in the national destiny God had in store for the people.

In all these ways, and many others, the heritage of the family was linked with the religious heritage of the people of God. Life in the nation, lived according to God's covenant and the law, was always bound in with the unity of the family from generation to generation. To preserve the family and to preserve the righteousness of the nation were almost one and the same thing. No individual stood alone before God; nor did he stand just as a citizen of a particular state. He stood as a member of a particular family, as a father, or as a son or a daughter of one particular father and mother. Furthermore, God's commands were to be taught in the family by the parents;

religious education was the task of the home. (See *Deut. 6: 1-9*.)

The whole meaning of religion for the Jews was grounded in their memory of the deliverance from Egypt and of God's covenant with them. Quite literally, the Hebrew people lived by this memory, and in the hope of what the God of their deliverance would continue to do for them. But this national memory was not only the bond that held them together as a whole people. It was also the bond that joined one generation to another, father to son and son to father. "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the significance of . . . ?' you must say to your son, 'When we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, the Lord brought us out of Egypt by a strong

hand.'" (*Deut. 6: 20, 21*).¹ The families were held together through generations in the same way as the large community was held together—by common fidelity to God and a memory of his deeds on their behalf. Biblical religion is grounded history; thus the Bible is filled with genealogies which indicate how the heritage has been transmitted from one generation to another down to the present day.

"That You May Live Long in the Land"¹

Notice now how several times in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy long life is promised as an outcome of obedience to God's instruction. The Commandments of God are "for our good always, that he might keep us alive as at this day" (*v. 24*¹). A long and good life is promised to the people as a whole as long as they live by the memory of the righteousness of God and pass on his instruction from one generation to another in the family.

This throws light on how we are to understand the promise, "that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you," when it is added to the command, "Honor your father and mother" (*Ex. 20: 12*¹). Of course, this does not mean that the individual who rightly honors his parents will, as a reward, live to a ripe old age. The promise speaks primarily of long life for the people as a whole. The meaning is, ". . . that you, Israel, may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." Through individual obedience and the integrity of family life the nation will be able to enjoy long life in the Promised Land.

It is easy to see how this same promise applies today. Nations can endure only if they are composed of strong families that set their family life on the heritage of the religion of the fathers and their father's God. A special obligation falls on Christians in this matter. We are the heirs of Israel and the command, "Honor your father and mother,"¹ requires that we maintain a close relationship to God our Father, in all aspects of family living. The strength of the nation, in fact, depends upon *us*, for only as we obey this command can our nation live long in the land that the Lord our God has given us.

Honoring Father and Mother

We turn now to consider how we can honor our parents.

The Scripture Lesson for May 18

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 12; Deut. 6: 1-7; Mark 7: 9-13;*

Luke 2: 41-52; John 19: 25-27

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 12; Deut. 6: 1-7; Mark 7: 9-13*

The Golden Text: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."—*Ex. 20: 12*.

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 12 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

* * * * *

Deut. 6: 1 Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it; 2 that thou mightest fear Jehovah thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as Jehovah, the God of thy fathers, hath promised unto thee, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: 5 and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; 7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

(Revised Standard Version)

Mark 7: 9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'; 11 but you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God)—12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do."

1. The Church, as the spiritual heir of Israel, should have the sense of being the family of God. Does the Church as a whole, and your particular church, have this spirit? How can it be cultivated?
2. What is the relation between Christian family life and the preservation of our land? How can we strengthen our families for this purpose?
3. In what ways does God set us the example of fatherly love?

often happens that our parents before we, their children, learn it means to honor them. Indeed, we can scarcely know fully how to honor them until we have children of our own; and even then, death almost always leaves us regretting the word spoken and the deed undone that might have warmed a mother's or a father's heart. For fulfilling the Commandment, however, this does not mean. We can still honor father and mother after they have departed from us. We do this not simply by holding them in loving remembrance. We honor our parents most of all when we are for and love our own children as we ourselves were once loved and cared for at great personal cost by our parents. Devotion to every real parent of our own children is, indeed, the way to pay highest tribute to our parents. This holds the generations together, bound each to each in honor of fathers before us. This law of God, far from being a command for children only. It is placed upon parents also, in the way they serve their children.

Those who are not parents may still honor the Commandment, for there is always some child to serve, some new generation to lead into the knowledge of what God has done for our fathers and mothers. Always there will be a child to whom "What is the significance of the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?" (*Deut. 10:1*). We honor father and mother by guiding the young with the same loving concern as was manifested toward us by our own parents when we were still dependent on them. This is the golden thread on which is strung a life of heritage in the family.

Honoring Our Father in Heaven

There is a striking parallel between the pattern and the continuity of the religious heritage of the Bible. Throughout the Scriptures we are taught to remember our God and act faithfully toward our Heavenly Father by duplicating his acts in some measure in the present day. Therefore, the

only way to obey God our Father and honor him for past graciousness toward us is to love his children—all his children—now. We should treat the enslaved and downtrodden, the "sojourner" or alien resident in the land, as God treated us when we were enslaved in the Egypt of our sin. We should be faithful as he is faithful, perfect as he is perfect. We are to forgive a brother as we have been forgiven by God.

Ordinarily, even evil men may know how to give good gifts to their children. But there may be someone reading these words whose parents have not meant good to him. How then shall he honor *them*? Unfortunately, there are mothers and fathers whose behavior and motives are not worthy of honors. But great as these failures may be, and great as is our personal loss for not having been brought up in homes where love and happiness reigned, still we can love new generations in the way we ought to have been loved by the parents who failed us.

There is instruction in this matter in the love of God our Father for his unfaithful people. In *Hos., ch. 11*, we have the mourning of God because his children spurned his love. Yet he did not give them up:

"How can I give you up, O Ephraim!
How surrender you, O Israel!

My mind turns against me;
My sympathies also grow hot.
I will not carry out my fierce anger;
Nor will I again destroy Ephraim;
For I am God and not man,
The holy one in the midst of you;
And I will not destroy."

(*Hos. 11: 8, 9.*)¹

If God so loved us, it is our duty to love one another. The cruelty and unkindness we have known is small compared with the way we have treated God. But he remembers mercy. Therefore, we honor him, our Father, by loving as he has loved us. He took us by the hand and taught us to walk. By "loving cords" he drew us. Whatever the offense, he did not let us go.

Sermons to Schoolgirls

The Gospel in Slow Motion, by Ronald Knox. (Sheed & Ward. 182 pages. \$2.50.)

While working on his translation of the Bible during World War II, Monsignor Knox served as chaplain to a girls' convent school in Shropshire, England. This present book is the third in a trilogy of sermon courses which he preached there to schoolgirl congregations. The other two were entitled *The Mass in Slow Motion* and *The Creed in Slow Motion*.

This concluding series of twenty-three short sermons, based on the Epistle and Gospel readings for particular Sundays in the Church year, reveals the same delightful humor and lucidity for which Monsignor Knox is justly notable. The Scripture passages, taken from his own translation, are printed in full at the beginning of each sermon. His handling of the Bible is amazingly fresh and vivid, with an almost startling lack of pious decorum and yet with deep reverence. For interpretation he draws on ancient commentators; for illustration he goes to the morning newspaper. Certainly, those who first heard these sermons must have been impressed with the vitality and pertinence to modern life that the Bible possesses. And so will those who read this published version!

To be sure, the American Protestant reader will occasionally take exception to the theological slant, but less frequently than one would expect. Monsignor Knox ranks with the best and the most winsome of contemporary Roman Catholic leaders.—*Lewis A. Briner.*

Understanding a Neighbor

What the Jews Believe, by Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein. (Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc. 100 pages, \$1.25.)

This is an expansion of a popular article on the faith of modern Judaism which appeared in *Life* magazine. Rabbi Bernstein writes clearly and with authority as one of the outstanding American rabbis today. He sets forth the ancient beliefs of his people and then explains how they are understood by both the Orthodox and the liberal Jew.

The book is effectively illustrated with woodcuts by Fritz Eichenberg, one of which appears in this magazine.

—*George L. Hunt.*

Lesson 8—GOD'S ESTIMATE OF HUMAN LIFE

THE Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," plainly means, "You must not commit murder." Not every case of taking life is murder. From an ethics of "reverence for life" a person may, of course, adopt a vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing living creatures for their meat. He may oppose capital punishment on the principle that man does not have the right to take the life even of a criminal. Or he may become a pacifist, with conscientious scruples against participating in the wholesale destruction of human life in war. There may be much to be said in favor of one or another of these points of view. Many sensitive people and profound thinkers champion each of these ways of avoiding killing.

But none of these was the meaning of the Sixth Commandment, which prohibits murder. Murder means *the wanton and arbitrary taking of another person's life by persons acting in a private capacity and for selfish ends*. Only in this sense could the ancient Hebrews have understood the prohibition. And today we do not debate about whether murder is wrong. The argument in courts of law is always over whether or not a particular act of killing is actually a case of murder, and to what legal degree. In this way we acknowledge that not every case of taking life is murder.

The Angry Thought

In his teachings Jesus filled this command with a deeper meaning. Out of the heart are the issues of life. So Jesus traced murder home to its source in the inner motive. Anger that holds a steady grudge against a brother, jealousy that stands in the way of reconciliation with him, and the attitude that despises him as an utter fool—these things, in the teachings of Jesus, were as severely condemned as was murder under the law. The law to prohibit murder actually fixes our attention upon a symptom, but in forbidding anger and envy Jesus went directly to the disease itself which needs to be cured. This does not mean that actual murder is not an additional crime. It only means that the actual murder began long ago and deeper down in the hardness or anger of the heart.

It is important to distinguish between momentary thoughts and a steady or habitual frame of mind. John Wesley commented on Jesus' teaching about lustful thoughts: "You can't prevent birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair." This applies as well to what Jesus says about anger. Passing moods of irritation or even moments of impulsive anger may come and go like birds over our heads. Of course, in one of these heated moments a man may actually kill another, and this shows that purely impulsive actions are not unimportant.

Nevertheless, Jesus was talking about hardened hatred and holding a grudge against another. He was speaking about wrath that continues on as

a permanent attitude toward another. Paul approved of a certain sort of anger, but quite in the spirit of Jesus' teaching he said, "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (*Eph. 4:26*, R.S.V.). Jesus also had in mind wrath that continues after the sun goes down. Such a steady inner attitude means indeed that one has already committed murder in his heart. In thought he has already blotted out the image of the other person. Like a savage, practicing magic, he has drawn a picture of his enemy in the sand and has already stuck a knife through it. He says within his heart: "You fool! You nonentity! The world would be better off if you were no longer in it." Thus he lives absolutely unreconciled to the being of another man, unwilling to accept him. Actually, killing him adds nothing essential that the steadfastly angry mind has not already thought implicitly.

Morality Without Immortality

In yet another respect, what people think has much to do with whether or not in their morality they have any real regard for human life. One of the characters in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* was said to have declared that without belief in immortality there would be no basis for morality: "That there is no law of nature that men should love mankind, and that, if there has been any love on earth hitherto, it is not owing to a natural law, simply because men have believed in immortality." Without a belief in immortality, which, in sum, expresses God's estimate of hu-

man life, anything is permitted and the necessity of the situation seems to require us to do.

The idea that without belief in immortality there would be no basis for morality must be properly understood as a purely Christian conception. We do not mean by this that the motive for good behavior is the threat of punishment in hell or the promise of rewards in heaven. It is not peril of eternal torment, but a man's estimate of the present meaning of another man's life, that ultimately holds him hand back from murder.

God has "made us, and not we ourselves." God has made our neighbors and we have not. God creates and sustains in existence every individual human being who has existence. Therefore, *God alone should place death as a terminal point at the end of an individual's existence*, for he alone can be beside us in death to see that we cannot go beyond his love and care. This fixes God's law against slaughter and against self-slaughter (suicide). This is the truth of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

The Scripture teaches that man is made in the image of God. Each person himself is in the image of God. The fact that we now are God's special creature raises us above physical nature and above bondage to the special group much more than does our upright stature or even certain capacities we have for reasoning. God has made us for himself, and not for mere inclusion within society. Man is made to be ruled by God. He is also made for worship and for fellowship with God.

Without the conviction that this is true, there is no basis for morality; we do not believe that our neighbor is an immortal soul made for life with God, then nothing is left in our estimate of his life to prevent our taking his life. We may not yet have done that, but we may have done it. Indeed any more than we actually take the lives of everyone with whom we are angry. But an unreconciled spirit who would be happier were another person not alive has already blotted him out in thought.

The Effect of Ignoring God's Estimate of Man

Once having denied that man has any value to God, there are no limits upon our brutality. We may be humane, as the Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals is humane
the gentle, peaceful way in which
its rid of unwanted animals. But
is no more than an animal if in
thoughts he is considered apart
his relationship to God.

the steadily increasing disregard
human life in our time is some-
g alarming, but in a time that has
otten man's relationship to God,
not surprising. The murderous
s of evil men—such as extermin-
on in the Nazi gas chambers—
contained already in the thought
man belongs, not to God, but
lly to the nation, or to the party,
o "the cause."

he crucial test is what we feel we
permitted to do with another hu-
being even for a *good* cause. What
y pressing a button and killing a
le Chinese or Russian on the other
of the world, no one ever know-
what you have done, you might
unimaginable happiness for your-
and the resources to do incal-
cable good in the world? Would you
s the button? Unless you think
at man's life in terms of his worth
od, you have already, in principle,
ified his possible murder for the
of the "greatest happiness of the
test number," or some other quite
onable earthly cause. This way of
king about man has already
sed the button.

he new barbarism of the present
flows from precisely this sort of
king. Man is regarded as no more
part of the social group. When
the collective life demands it,
individual may be sacrificed—"hu-
ely," of course. Thus the individ-
is reduced to a key on the key-
of a piano or the handle of a
ly-gurdy, on which the latest tunes
played by those who have the
er. When a man's life is regarded
worth no more than its contribu-
to the progress of the future, it
ot unreasonable to use him, in
oevsky's apt phrase, to "manure
oil for the future harmony."

ur only hope lies in the conviction
every individual is something
e than just a single cell in the body
ociety. Every person is, of course,
rt of the web of common life, with
isite duties to the common good.
there is that thing within man
h transcends the community of
It is his individual personality
which he stands alone and in his
right before God, his Maker. The
way to think about man, there-

fore, is from the point of view of
God's estimate of him, as a person
with individual value and individual
worth. This is the only conception of
him that does not in the final analysis
prove—for perfectly good worldly rea-
sons—murderous.

God's Estimate of the "Worthless"

The worth of the individual—even
one who by earthly standards seems
worthless—is taught us by Jesus in
the parable of the Lost Sheep. The
ninety-nine—the group—were left, ex-
posed to danger out on the hills, while
the shepherd sought the single in-
dividual until he found him. Human
shepherds quite rightly have more
concern for the herd than that! But
God does not treat mankind as a herds-
man treats his herd. He cares for us
one by one, even at cost to the herd as
a whole. This should lift us forever
above the herd-mind so prevalent to-
day, and show us what infinite value
we ought always to place on the life

of every individual human being.

And upon the murderer also! Cain
was the first man to kill his brother.
His life was therefore built on that
fact, for Cain knew that as a conse-
quence of his murder every man's
hand would be against him. *But God
mercifully established conditions un-
der which the murderer might still
live.* In a similar way, when Adam and
Eve were justly under sentence of
death from the day they ate the for-
bidden fruit, God mercifully sus-
pended the sentence and restored
conditions for life even for those who
were in principle dead already.

The sevenfold vengeance fixed upon
anyone who killed Cain needs today
to be taken seriously if ever there is
to be a stop to the bloodletting, the
liquidation and counterliquidation of
people in great groups. In fact, the
question of how we act toward evil
men provides the crucial test for our
estimate of human life. Murder is
wrong, and Cain has murdered his
brother: therefore, let every man's

The Scripture Lesson for May 25

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 13; Matt. 5: 21-26; 18: 1-6, 10-14;*

Mark 1: 40-42; Luke 9: 51-56; 12: 4-7

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 13; Matt. 5: 21-26; 18: 11-14*

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not kill."—*Ex. 20: 13.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 13 Thou shalt not kill.

(Revised Standard Version)

Matt. 5: 21 "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; ²⁶ truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny."

* * * * *

Ch. 18: 11 * "For the Son of man came to save that which was lost. ¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

* Verse 11 is a footnote in the Revised Standard Version.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is the murderous thought as evil as the murderous deed?
2. What is the case against capital punishment? Is it any different from the case against war?
3. What guidance does God's treatment of Cain give us in our treatment of murderers?

hand be against him and let whoever meets him slay him. So blood calls for blood. The party in power purges and liquidates its opposition; therefore, let them be purged and liquidated in their turn. A nation treats prisoners of war atrociously; therefore, let there be no regard for the lives of their nationals who fall into our hands. *Only God's concern to establish conditions for new life even for Cain can break into the spiraling increase of the practice and approval of violence in our day and our steadily declining respect for the immortal soul who is every man.*

The Basic Principles

In this lesson we have sought only to establish certain basic principles that grow out of the canon, "Thou shalt not kill." First, we have said that the evil thought by which we desire to harm a brother is, according to Jesus, the same as murder. Secondly, we have pointed out that our attitude toward men must be determined by God's attitude toward them: that they are creatures of inestimable worth to him, made in his image. We went on, in the third place, to describe what hap-

pens when men and nations ignore God's attitude. We have concluded by speaking of God's estimate of the "worthless," including the murderers themselves.

Naturally, we have left many questions unanswered. What is to be the Christian attitude toward war? How can a serious and sincere Christian engage in war, since what he is doing violates the law of God expressed in this Commandment? Can we justify our resistance to those who threaten our country?

These are important questions for application. But we must first understand the principle and then ask how they can be practical. The basic question to answer is the one raised by the lesson about God's estimate of human life. Our attitude toward our fellow men will determine the answer we make to the practical question with which our world confronts us.

Lesson 9—THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (Christ's Standard of Moral Purity)

SOMETIME ago it was discovered that hundreds of divorces had been secured in the State of New York on fraudulent evidence of adultery—evidence fabricated because the state law allows divorce only in the case of infidelity. Here were large numbers of men and women deliberately pretending to be adulterers because this was the only way a divorce could be secured! This disclosure served to focus public sentiment on the need for reform of the law. Many persons of Christian conviction and deep moral insight have felt that surely a law that leads to such subterfuge and perjury is worse than one that would permit divorces on other grounds, even though such a law also would be subject to abuse.

This point of view seems eminently sane and truly moral. Yet at first glance it seems also completely contrary to the teaching of Jesus! What could be more plain than the statement, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery"? Does not Jesus expressly and unmistakably forbid divorce, or at any rate, remarriage after divorce? Matthew's report of this saying makes an exception in the case of unchastity (*Matt. 5: 32; 19: 9*), but both Mark and Luke record the prohibition as absolute (*Mark 10: 11, 12; Luke 16: 18*).

A New Law

But stop a moment. We have been speaking as if the intention of Jesus were to proclaim a law, to lay down a new rule in place of the old one, or to restore the original stringent law in place of later relaxed interpretations. Yet this is not true to his usual attitude toward the law. Jesus seems quite willing to violate the Jewish law that protected the holiness of the Sabbath when a man was to be healed, or even when he and the disciples were a little hungry.

Jesus does give specific instructions to individuals, indicating what they must do or forego, and he relates parables to illustrate what is the will of God, but he neither speaks nor acts as one who comes with a new code of laws, which men can obey and by which they can count themselves righteous. He comes as one declaring the pure will and intention of God, and calling men to repentance. Surely Paul speaks in the mind of Christ when he declares that Christians are free from the law, free to serve their neighbor in whatever ways love may require.

The saying about divorce is one of the four or five sayings of Jesus that might seem to be explicit laws laid down by him. Christians have frequently so interpreted his teaching. In the New Testament period itself, the evidence of this attitude. Taken as a new "law," this saying is too harsh for any realistic social arrangement and so in the Gospel of Matthew we find the exception allowed, "except for unchastity" (*Matt. 19: 9, R.S.V.*). But if this exception, why not others—desertion, drunkenness, cruelty—well? If we are really to be honest in taking Jesus' words as a law, then we must admit that the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is correct on divorce at all. (Of course, in Catholicism, the grounds for annulment are many and varied, so that the strictness of the regulation is somewhat relaxed.)

God's Purpose for Marriage

To take this saying legalistically, however, is to lose the point of it completely. For in what precedes in *Matthew (ch. 10: 2-9)* we can see the real intention of Jesus. He is not interested in settling the question of the grounds for divorce, which was a hotly debated

Lessons 9, 10, and 11 were written by CLAUDE WELCH, professor of theology, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

tion at the time. He is, rather, in-
on proclaiming the eternal pur-
of God in the creation of man
woman. He is talking about the
ing of marriage.

is God's purpose that two should
joined together into one. In God's
an indissoluble bond is estab-
d, and "divorce" is only a "legal
on" that does not alter the reality
d. In human terms, this means that
lives are so closely woven to-
er that they are no longer separa-
The separation of man and wife
ore than the dissolution of a busi-
partnership: it is the tearing out
vital part of each person's life.

urther, we need to notice that it is
ifically remarriage after divorce
hich Jesus speaks. Of course, re-
riage was the rule in Jewish so-
y, and Jesus may not have had in
d at all the possibility of divorce
out remarriage. But Paul does
k to this question, allowing the
ibility of separation and recalling
s' injunction concerning remar-
e. (Rom. 7: 2, 3; I Cor. 7: 10, 11.)
he meaning of these statements is

etween husband and wife a rela-
ship is created that is severed only
death. Moreover, it is in the sexual
tion that the bond of unity is espe-
y to be found. Recall that in all
e sayings, Jesus emphasizes the
ity that results from remarriage.

is one of the central drives of our
an existence. It is also an ultimate
ndary that God has placed on our
s. "God made them male and fe-
e." (Mark 10: 6, R.S.V.) As male
female we are incomplete in our-
es. We find our completion, the
ning of our manhood and woman-
d, in relation to one member of the
osite sex. In this woman I come to
knowledge of myself as man, and
e she perceives the mystery of her
unique creation. This mutual
reness is something that we shall
re as long as we live. It is a bond
is broken only by death.

The Inwardness of Sin

his understanding of sex helps us
ee clearly the force of Jesus' say-
in Matt. 5: 28 (R.S.V.): "Every
who looks at a woman lustfully
already committed adultery with
in his heart." This is the truly im-
sible saying. It appears that even
ptation is sin. Not only the act it-
s, but the desire is evil—that is,
ual desire that oversteps the limits
the marriage relationship. Such de-

sire is already a violation of the bond
that is established between a man and
his wife.

Two things are implied here: (1)
The sinful act springs from the sinful
desire. The reformation of our char-
acter must begin within. We are to
look inward, to the transformation of
our thoughts and motives. Thus Jesus
speaks in Matt. 5: 29, 30; (see also
ch. 19: 8, 9; Mark 9: 43-48) of the
need for violent action in removing
from our lives the source of evil, of
a radical surgery to remove the malig-
nant growth. (2) Lust is not simply
physical desire or biological impulse,
for the sexual relation in human life is
never a purely physical relation. Just
as in marriage an abiding spiritual re-
lation is established, so in lust there
is an intention to violate that relation.
Lust is therefore not simply an ex-
ternal stimulus, a "temptation." It is
an "inordinate" desire, a physical im-
pulse combined with a self-centered
wish to have something for ourselves,
to have power over another person, to

use another person for our own inter-
ests, to subordinate the purpose of the
sexual relation to the attainment of
something for ourselves. This is our
own doing, not a desire that arises
quite apart from our control. It is
something for which we are responsi-
ble. That is why lust is sin. It is a vio-
lation of God's purpose.

The Forgiveness of Sins and the Hardness of Hearts

What is to be our response to Jesus'
declaration of the purpose of God in
marriage and sexual relations? One
thing is clear. We must confess our
guilt. Jesus came to call men to re-
pentance. When we judge ourselves by
the demand of God, which he pro-
claimed, we know that in us too there
is evil desire, and that our homes do
not fulfill the divine purpose of mar-
riage. We have no right to point a self-
righteous finger at those who seem
more obviously guilty of sexual sin, or
whose marriages are broken in divorce.
We too have sinned and need to look

The Scripture Lesson for June 1

Scripture: Ex. 20: 14; Matt. 5: 27-32; Mark 10: 2-12

The Printed Text: Ex. 20: 14; Matt. 5: 27-32; Mark 10: 2-9

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."—
Ex. 20: 14.

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

(Revised Standard Version)

Matt. 5: 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

* * * * *

Mark 10: 2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to put her away."⁵ But Jesus said to them, "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'⁷ 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,⁸ and the two shall become one.' So they are no longer two but one.⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

to the forgiveness and the grace of God. The great contrast that we are to see in Jesus' saying on divorce is not the contrast between the law of Moses and any "law" of Jesus. It is the contrast between the intention of God in the creation of man and woman and our failure to fulfill that intention.

Jesus did not come to bring a new law, but the message of the Kingdom. This fact gives us a clue to the problem of divorce laws. The worst sort of misuse of Jesus' teachings occurs when Christians make them into laws and then try to impose those laws upon non-Christians. This is the sin of the Roman Catholic Church when it seeks state prohibition of divorce. But more than this, Christians have no right to make Jesus' words into *laws* for other Christians. The purpose of God is not fulfilled by the compulsion of law. No man can be forced to obey the will of God. That would not be obedience at all, but only a tragic misconception of God's desire and intention.

The law presupposes sin. It is always written in view of the hardness of men's hearts. Jesus portrayed the pure will of God for the relation of man and wife. The law of divorce enters the picture only when this pure intention of God has already been disrupted. The law by its very nature must provide for those cases where the purpose of marriage has been frustrated. Not only adultery but a variety of other factors may be the cause of the broken relationship. Therefore the law may properly allow for divorce on a variety of grounds.

The Way to Obedience

The Christian, however, sees that the existence of a law permitting divorce does not at all relax *his* obligation to the intention of God. Jesus here teaches us the divine purpose in marriage. This purpose should be our purpose. We may see it in at least three aspects:

1. Christian marriage is founded on the *will to permanence*. We do not enter marriage with the idea that it will continue as long as romantic love lasts, or until a husband finds some excuse for divorcing his wife. Marriage is a declaration of intention and determination that this union shall last until death. The will to permanence provides the soil in which love will not only last but grow. And the will to permanence is a safeguard against the self-centeredness whereby one looks at his *claims* upon the partner, instead

Questions for Discussion

1. What did Christ give in place of the law? Apply your answer to the marriage relationship.
2. What is God's purpose in marriage?
3. Do you agree with the statement, "The law may properly allow for divorce on a variety of grounds"? Why or why not?
4. What is the difference between the situation of the Christian and the non-Christian as far as moral conduct is concerned?
5. What is the basis of Christian marriage?

of the opportunity for love and service to the partner. But most important, the will to permanence in marriage is an obedient recognition of the intention of God and of the unity that he wills to result in every marriage.

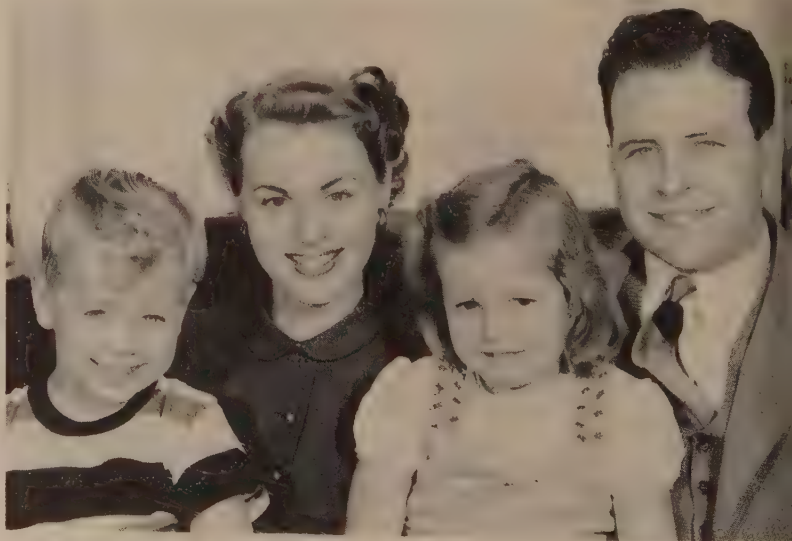
2. A new meaning is given to our failure to realize the fullness of God's purpose in our marriage. Whatever form the failure takes, it becomes an occasion for repentance and renewal—not an excuse to rush home to mother or to the divorce court. Jesus' words of the demand of God are intended *to lead us to repentance*. Only through hearty repentance and true faith are we ready for the Kingdom. Only as we confess our failure are we able to receive the forgiveness of God and the grace by which to restore the broken relationship. Out of sin and failure God is able to bring good and the fulfillment of his purposes. Our difficulties, the friction in our home, need not lead to the destruction of marriage. They can lead us to view

ourselves in the light of Christ, and humility and repentance to seek service even as Christ served.

3. Finally, Christian marriage is based on the *claim* that one partner has upon the other, but upon the love that seeks first to meet the needs of the other. Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition. It cannot rest on my willingness to go halfway, and my demand that my wife also go halfway. This is a legalistic attitude, which is based on self-centered claims. Christian love seeks to serve rather than to be served to give rather than to demand. The questions for me always are: "Have I really sought to fulfill the needs of my partner? Have I tried to serve Jesus served me? Have I really placed God's will in the chief place?" The way of putting the question cuts its support from under the problem of "grounds" for divorces. And it also enables me to appropriate the word Jesus and to fulfill in my home God's purpose for it.

THE WILL TO PERMANENCE

Christian marriage, to be as happy as this family is, is built on the will to permanence. "Marriage is a declaration of intention and determination that this union shall last until death."



Lesson 10—PERSONS AND PROPERTY

WE HAVE no direct word of Jesus on stealing. This parallels his sayings about the laws of murder, divorce, retaliation, oaths, and attitudes toward the enemy, but it is not hard to discover what he would say. For Jesus speaks often and vigorously about money and possessions.

When he refers to the Commandment against murder, Jesus looks within the hearts of men and points to the anger and evil intention that lead to killing. When these desires place one in danger of the hell of fire. So in reference to stealing, he would certainly say, "Whoever *desires* to steal is already guilty." But this is already said in the Commandments—"Thou shalt not *covet*."

Does Jesus go farther than this? Most definitely he does. What he says about possessions is much more radical than the Commandment against covetousness. Seeking to understand his word to us, we may distinguish two poles about which the sayings concerning property seem to revolve: (1) the great peril of riches, and (2) the requirement of stewardship.

Interpretations of Jesus' Teaching About Wealth

Francis of Assisi (together with many other monks who took the vow of poverty) is an example of one who perceived the rigor of Jesus' teaching about the peril of wealth. The imitation of Christ and true obedience to his commands meant, for Francis, giving up all material possessions. Only so could he truly serve the Master.

Some of the later Puritans, on the other hand, went to the other extreme. They read Jesus' words on the faithful use of possessions but passed over his condemnation of wealth. There is nothing wrong with material gain, they said, as long as it is used for the glory of God. A man may rightfully gain all that he honestly can; in fact, he *should* gain all he can, for the furtherance of God's work. But then, because they did not see the other side of Jesus' teaching, many of the Puritans went farther and claimed that prosperity was itself a mark of righteousness and God's favor. Poverty was the result of sin, and the poor man was to be despised. Already they were serving mammon. The love of success had blinded their vision to God's truth.

Each of these ways is an escape from the full demand of God's will. The whole measure of this demand requires a full appreciation of both poles of Jesus' teaching about the goods of this world.

God or Mammon

"You cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16: 13, R.S.V.) Jesus declares that a complete choice must be made—God or money. Only one can be our master; it is impossible for anyone to divide his loyalties in this way. If one seeks wealth, he is no servant of God. If he serves God, he

cannot be the servant of money.

This theme is one to which Jesus returns again and again. He invites us to consider the rich fool, who put his trust in bigger barns and increased savings, only to discover that in the end they brought him nothing. (Ch. 12: 16-21.) He counsels his disciples to be concerned only for the treasures of heaven (vs. 33, 34), and never to be anxious about life or food or clothing (vs. 22-32). He reminds us of the fortunes of the rich man and Lazarus. (Ch. 16: 19-31.) In vs. 9 and 11 of the Scripture for today, Jesus speaks of "unrighteous mammon." Not just dishonest gain, but money itself, he seems to say, belongs to the evil world, to the age that is about to pass away.

In the case of the rich ruler (Mark 10: 17-22), it is only his wealth that stands between him and eternal life. But what a barrier this is! Jesus exclaims that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (v. 25, R.S.V.). Christians have often tried to soften this declaration, or explain it away, by interpreting the "camel" as a reference to a kind of rope, or by identifying the "needle's eye" with a gate in Jerusalem. But these interpretations are without foundation; they are only evasions of the obvious meaning of the saying. It is impossible (physically speaking) for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; so it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom.

But is it not the *desire* for wealth that Jesus denounces? Probably. Yet the action of this rich ruler vividly shows that the possession of wealth seems inseparable from the desire for it. The temptation that wealth brings is irresistible. No man can possess it without becoming its servant. If Jesus really has in mind the desire for riches,

then he also believes it quite impossible (with men) for a rich man to escape the seductions of wealth.

This saying then becomes a judgment upon us all. For the average American is fantastically wealthy by the standards of Palestine in Jesus' time! And who of us can say honestly that he is not a servant of mammon? How few there are whose lives are not dominated by the desire for financial gain! Perhaps we do not insist on wealth as judged by modern standards, but do we not strive desperately for a "comfortable living" and just a little bit more?

Of course, wealth is not the only thing that hinders our entrance into the Kingdom. But it is certainly one of the greatest stumbling blocks. We live in a money-mad society, in which the Golden Rule seems to be to get ahead at all costs. We want security—and more. We point with pride to the fact that America has the highest standard of living in the world, and we are quite determined to maintain it, come what may. It is this spirit which pervades our society and influences the thinking and attitudes of our children more than anything else, for there is probably no more important educational influence than the economic spirit in which persons grow up.

In the midst of the constant pressures of a system that praises success above all else, and the tantalizing temptation of money and the power and pleasures that it brings, the Christian hears the words of Jesus: "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16: 13, R.S.V.). "How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark 10: 24, 25, R.S.V.)

Can Possessions Be Faithfully Used?

We have seen how great is the danger of wealth for the soul. But there is another accent in Jesus' words: "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19: 26, R.S.V.). Jesus did not command all men to give up their possessions. By God's power men can be delivered from the seemingly irresistible attraction of possessions, i.e., from bondage to mammon. If we are truly willing to be servants of God, to humble ourselves before him, and acknowledge our weakness and our pursuit of

the gods of success, God can overcome the false loves in our hearts. If we are willing to become as little children, and to be obedient to him as Jesus was obedient, we can be freed from the love of property and possessions.

Then we can become stewards of that which is entrusted to us. Then the faithfulness with which we use even the "unrighteous mammon" can be a sign of our trustworthiness for the true riches of the spirit. (*Luke 16: 10-12.*) Then and only then can we become *faithful stewards*.

What does Christian stewardship mean? How ought we to use material possessions?

1. The first principle of a faithful use of possessions is found in the acknowledgment that these things are

not our own, but are only entrusted to us. None of us have ever *created* wealth. We have only worked with those materials which God has given us to use. He is the Creator, and all belongs to him. To him, therefore, must go all the gratitude and the praise.

Each of us has a vocation, a calling. Each of us is placed in a unique position of responsibility, with certain abilities and opportunities, certain material and spiritual possessions, that are to be used according to the position in God's world that he occupies. No one else can ever fulfill the exact obligation that he ought to fulfill.

I must always begin, therefore, by asking myself: "Have I honestly and

fully given my life to God's purposes?" "Have I sought to make his will my will?" "Have I truly acknowledged that all that I have is his, or have I tried to steal from him by claiming that I have a right to do with my property whatever I please?"

2. This leads to another sort of question that I must ask myself: "Have I recognized God's ownership by using my property and possession for his work? for the spreading of his truth?" "Have I given to his Church in a way that truly acknowledges that all is his?" "Have I placed the work of his Church first among my financial obligations, above all my own comforts, so that it is *easy* for me to give to the needs of his work?"

3. The right use of possessions by no means stops with the giving of money to the Church. It applies to every aspect of the way in which we use our money and property. The love of God issues forth in our love for others. So if we would be faithful in the use of possessions, that use must be directed toward others. If we seek material gains for ourselves, our own comforts and pleasures, we make mammon our master. Only if we use what we have as a means for serving our neighbor are we faithful in our stewardship.

What Is Right in an Unjust Man?

Now we need to consider directly the difficult parable of the Unjust Steward, which appears in the lesson Scripture. If we read the parable carefully, we can see why this man is commended for his action. It is not his dishonesty, but his willingness to act and his prudence, or shrewdness, that are praised. Jesus tells this story as an example of a man who, faced with a crisis, was willing to make a decision. The dishonesty of the man, as well as his poor management, is obvious. Both are the marks of an unfaithful steward. But the point Jesus wants to make is that we should be as wise and prudent in our stewardship, as this man was.

The children of light ought to be as wise both in the ways of this world and in the ways of God's will as the children of this world are cunning in worldly ways. The Christian steward ought to be shrewd in seeing ways of obeying God's will. He ought to know what the purposes of God are, he ought to calculate carefully the difficulty of his task, and he ought to be

The Scripture Lesson for June 8

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 15; Luke 16: 1-16* (printed in full)

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not steal."—*Ex. 20: 15.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 15 Thou shalt not steal.

(Revised Standard Version)

Luke 16: 1 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ² And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' ³ And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' ⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸ The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence; for the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

¹⁰ "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵ But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

¹⁶ "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently."

in choosing the means for fulfilling the demands of God's will. But honesty and prudence in the use of possessions are not enough. They are not the *purpose* of stewardship; they only serve the final purpose. That purpose is obedience to God in love for the neighbor. Thus the final questions that I must always ask myself are: "Am I honestly using the possessions that I have for the service

Questions for Discussion

1. Have sincere people sometimes been unwise and misguided in the generous use of their money for the needs of others?
2. What are some forms of "mammon" (other than money) that we serve rather than God?
3. What is radical about Jesus' teaching on the use of possessions?

of my neighbor?" "Am I really following Christ in this—that I am using

all that God has entrusted to me as a means for expressing love for others?"

Lesson 11—THE OBLIGATION TO BE TRUTHFUL

EVERYONE agrees that a Christian ought to be truthful. But what does this mean? Is the ideal of truthfulness always clear in our minds? Do we fully understand what is involved? Offhand, we say truthfulness means telling the truth and not telling the lie. This is part of the answer, but by no means the whole! The Commandment, the story of Peter's denial of Christ, Jesus' words concerning defilement—all suggest that something more is at stake, that there are deeper levels of meaning that need to be brought clearly into focus if we would have this goal clearly before us.

It is well to begin, however, with the most obvious meaning, truth-telling, and to remind ourselves how far short we fall, even of this external obligation, both in our personal lives and in our social responsibilities.

Falseness

It seems that into the very fabric of our society there is woven a pattern of falsehood. To be sure, we re-idealize the Communist doctrine that deceit and falsity are always legitimate means to achieving a goal. And we are intent on the vigorous prosecution of perjury. We do hold truth-telling as an ideal. But we take as a matter of course the patently false and slanderous charges with which candidates for political office malign each other. And we pass by without remark the broken campaign pledges. We have come to expect advertising claims to be false and misleading, or at least exaggerated. Much of our social life rests upon petty deceit and the "white lie." Is there any one of us who is without sin? Do we not need to bow in humility and seek forgiveness?

The "Whole" Truth

There is another side even to this simplest meaning of truthfulness. Truth-telling is not only a matter of avoiding false statements. It is often just as easy to be false to the truth by saying nothing as by saying some-

thing contrary to fact. We recognize this in the law courts when we ask for the "whole truth" as well as for "nothing but the truth." A portion of the truth concealed can give as false a description of the situation as many a deliberate misstatement. For me to suppress information about a crime, or to "forget" to mention some defect in the product I am selling, or to fail to include all my income in the tax report, or to devise means of violating the spirit of the law while not quite disobeying the letter—all this is surely to be disloyal to the truth. It is deliberate deceit.

It might seem enough to stop with this rough-and-ready conception of truthfulness. Surely this is a standard severe enough to judge us all. Even as far as simple telling of truth is concerned, we confess that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1: 8, R. S. V.).

Yet this standard of judgment is in itself not satisfactory, especially when the prohibition of lying is taken as a *law*, to be followed in any and all circumstances. We can all think of certain extreme cases in which it seems actually better *not* to tell the truth. Is not the leader of underground resistance against tyranny clearly justified, when caught, in refusing to tell the truth about his associates? And may not the doctor

be right in concealing the gravity of a patient's illness if he believes that this knowledge would break the patient's will to recover? Other instances could be suggested. What they show is that, as in the case of other "rules," the prohibition of lying cannot be taken as an absolute law. As soon as we become legalistic, we begin to find conflicts among our moral laws. Love for the neighbor may require violation of this "law." A deeper principle of truthfulness is needed.

As a matter of fact, the idea of "telling the truth" itself involves a double meaning. It refers to consistency between words and the *facts*, and it refers to coherence of *thought* and words. If I am truthful, my words really express my thoughts and intentions; and also, they describe the "facts" of the situation (to the best of my knowledge, of course). This distinction is illustrated in the passages of Scripture that we are considering today.

Truth and Persons

"You must not bring a false charge against your fellow."¹ This Commandment centers attention on a special kind of truthfulness—truthfulness about other *persons*. Among all things to which we are responsible and which our words ought to represent truly, *persons* are unquestionably the most important. I can lie about the size, shape, and chemical composition of a rock without doing much harm to the rock. But when I lie about the character of another person, I do great injury indeed.

The Ninth Commandment here centers unerringly on a crucial aspect of truthfulness, one that is peculiarly relevant to our time. Slander, malicious gossip, and backbiting are perennial temptations. But the problems of false accusations have been

¹ From *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, edited by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Published, 1939. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

intensified greatly by modern means of communication. A false report circulated by a news-gathering agency or by a syndicated columnist may destroy the trust of people throughout the country in a Government official. The millions of people who eagerly viewed on television the 1951 hearings of the Senate committee investigating crime can testify to the influence that a false charge can have when made before a battery of television cameras.

This does not mean that slander and unjust accusation are in themselves suddenly more wrong than before, but it may serve at least to remind us of the Commandment and of this part of our responsibility to others. Moreover, it can reveal to us the social dimension of the Commandment. It can open our eyes to the extent to which false and unproved accusations have tended to become the politician's stock-in-trade.

This has been clearly evident since the charges of Communism in government were raised early in 1950. Both then and since, honest investigations that protected the rights of the innocent have often been overshadowed by sensational and bitter accusations, frequently made under the cloak of Congressional immunity and not supported by any sort of evidence. The reputations of men have been made the pawns of political advantage.

Sometimes the argument is advanced that by the process of accusation itself new evidence is brought to light. It is impossible to see how such an argument can be squared with the Commandment. Whether the accusation is a deliberate falsification, or possibly true but unproved, makes no difference. We are concerned here with *truth that is consistent with the facts about other persons*; therefore, any statement that does not represent those facts correctly is untruth.

Truth and the Self

Another side of the demand for truthfulness appears when we turn to the words of Jesus concerning defilement (*Mark 7: 14-23*) and to the contrast between Jesus' statement before the Jewish court and Peter's denials of Christ (*John 18: 15-27*). So far we have considered truthfulness in largely external terms as the correspondence of our assertions to matters of fact. Jesus, however, sets the matter in a different and more profound perspective.

In reply to a query concerning his disciples' failure to observe the Jewish tradition, which prescribed certain ritual washings before meals as a means of avoiding defilement or uncleanness, Jesus replied that defilement is a matter of the heart, not of what touches the body. "There is nothing outside a man which by going

into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." (*Mark 7: 15*, R. S. V.)

The real meaning of this saying is clear. "Clean-ness" and "unclean-ness" are matters of the spirit of a man. Purity in God's sight depends upon *the inner purpose and intention*, out of which proceed either truth and love, or "evil thoughts, -fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, slander, pride, foolishness" (vs. 21, 22, R. S. V.). *Truthfulness is a matter of inner integrity*. It is that impulse in us which determines that our words and our actions shall flow forth in righteousness of heart.

Truthfulness, then, does not come merely in words or even actions, though it is always expressed in both forms. It is a *state of being full of truth*.

Here the words of Jesus penetrate again to the heart of the problem. Truthfulness rests ultimately upon a decision, an inner commitment, which is reflected and revealed in all that we do or say. Doing and speaking the truth rests upon a prior choice of the truth, which is God, and of complete integrity in that choice. This is a decision which removes the need for a multitude of decisions. It is an ultimate decision for truth which makes unnecessary all the momentary questions of truth or falsehood, all the hesitations of a troubled conscience. This does not mean that living the truth is easy—though Lincoln is reported to have said that no man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar—but the primary decision does certainly give to life a singleness of purpose and direction that cannot be obtained in any other terms.

Jesus' demand for absolute integrity is expressed also in the saying concerning oaths: "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" (*James 5: 12*, R. S. V.; cf. *Matt. 5: 33-37*). Oaths are to be avoided not out of fear of misuse of God's name, but because men are expected to be utterly truthful, as truthful as God. Oaths are required only where men are suspected of lying. Jesus seems to be saying that as soon as we begin to calculate the possibility of people's lying, we have destroyed the only possible foundation for a righteous and honest society.

The life that is undefiled, the life that God requires of us, is therefore a life of complete consistency, a life without any pretense or insincerity.

The Scripture Lesson for June 15

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 16; Mark 7: 14-23; John 18: 15-27*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 16; Mark 7: 14-23*

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."—*Ex. 20: 16*.

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

(Revised Standard Version)

Mark 7: 14 And he called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." * ¹⁷ And when he had entered the house, and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these things come from within, and they defile a man."

* Verse 16 is a footnote in the Revised Standard Version.

we can see this illustrated in the story of Jesus' trial and Peter's denial. Jesus declares to the high priest: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly" (John 18: 20, R. S. V.) His life and his teaching have always been a true testimony to his purposes. There was no hidden motive, no concealed ambition. His will has always been to do the will of his Father and to declare that will. Jesus has no last-minute explanations to make, no denials or disclaimers to present. He is wholly willing to stand on his words and deeds, because his life has been one of utter honesty and integrity, i.e., truthfulness. *He who is full of honesty and*

Questions for Discussion

1. A popular journalistic term today is "The Big Lie." It refers to Communist propaganda. But is not lying a relative matter in our own country today? Discuss how new means of communication (radio, television) make lying a greater problem for us.
2. How does a man's religious faith affect his view of truth and integrity?

integrity does not fear judgment.

The tragedy of Peter's denial is precisely a loss of integrity. He denies not only his Master, but also his own integrity. He is false to himself. In his unwillingness to stand up for the truth, he himself becomes untruth.

At the deepest level, then, the obligation to be truthful means complete willingness to speak the truth as best

we know it, without regard for consequences to ourselves, whatever the personal hardship or suffering, however unpopular the truth may be. It means that our words and actions shall truly correspond to our inward desires and intention. It means purity of heart, being filled with truth, out of which proceeds truthfulness of word, thought, and deed.

Lesson 12—THE SIN OF COVETING

(The Sin of Greed)

WHERE your treasure is, there will your heart be also," said Jesus. The Commandment against coveting, the Tenth and last, covers a multitude of sins. It demands purity *within*—in the affections, in the thoughts of the mind, in the soul itself. Even the best-behaved individuals are not always loving and humble children of God. They may have secret jealousies, unworthy desires, an uncontrolled appetite for wealth and material things, a smoldering temper, or an all-consuming lust for power. Despite their habits of good citizenship and their examples of good behavior, they lack the irradiating sort of love that points a finger to God.

The first and the last of the Ten Commandments are the most difficult to uphold. The first points to what rightfully, and indeed exclusively, belongs in the human heart—the love of God. The last tells us what must *not* be found there; for whereas the love of God is our own most precious heritage, such blemishes as are caused by unwholesome desires, greed of gain, false gods, and petty thoughts of all kinds have no place at all in the temple of the spirit. In the Tenth Commandment, as in all the others, we find condemned, not open acts, but secret attitudes; not what men see, but what the individual himself knows to be within.

How can one cleanse his heart and keep it pure? Jesus alone knew the answer. He lets us see first what is in our hearts, awakening within us a sense of shame for our transgressions, and then mercifully takes away our burden of guilt through his death upon the cross, leading us at last to the very throne of God Almighty.

Too Many Treasures

We are all violent coveters, eager to secure any number of possessions on which our hearts are set. We are in the world, exulting in the things of the world and in our own misery without them. We want what we cannot have, and what we have is a constant source of temptation. The lesson in this series on the Eighth Commandment ("Thou shalt not

steal") pointed out how possessions can stand in the way of entrance into the Kingdom. And now, as we come to the last of the Ten Commandments, we hear that our *yearning* for another's property, though we never openly steal at all, can actually "shut out" God from our lives.

This Commandment is unusually specific about what we shall not covet. It says: You will not covet what is not yours, not any part of your neighbor's field, nor any individual in his household. You will not brood over

the difference between the size of his field and that of your own. You will not lust after another man's wife. You will not wish to take his best farmhand away from him or to secure the services of one of his domestics. You will not let your mind dwell on these desires which you know are wrong.

Why are they wrong? They separate us from the love of God. "Beware of covetousness," said Jesus, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12: 15.) And the Master went on to tell the story of the rich and avaricious man who built larger and finer barns in which to accumulate his goods. So absorbed was he in the things of this life and in ease, eating, drinking, and making merry, that he was deaf to the summons of death, totally unprepared when called for an accounting before his Maker. And so he is called in the New Testament not so much a criminal as a "fool" (v. 20), for "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." We find in this parable, then, that the love of material things is the very opposite of the love of God.

Indeed, this theme recurs again and again in our devotional books as well as in much of secular literature. The restlessness of the human heart until it finds its security in the love of God has been the recurring experience of great souls from Augustine to Kierke-

This lesson was written by DORIS CAILET.

gaard. "Forsake coveting and thou shalt find great rest," wrote Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*. "For all possessors of worldly goods and all lovers of themselves, all covetous persons, all curious, all vain-glorious, all runners-about, all who pursue the delectable things in this world, greedily seeking things that shall not long endure, and not the things of Jesus Christ, be as men fettered and bound with chains. They have no perfect liberty nor freedom of spirit, for all things shall perish that be not wrought of God."¹

The accumulation of property, even if it be well earned through lifelong application and hard work, will not bring a man happiness either in the life to come or in this. The story has often been told of the old English hero Everyman (in a play of that name) who, about to die, finds he cannot take with him fellowship, kindred, goods, knowledge, or any other

worldly acquisition. And, as he has too long neglected God and the better impulses of his heart, he is very much at a loss as to how he will fare in the next world. Everyman's friend, Good Deeds, is so weak from disuse that it is all that she can do to get to the other side of the grave with him!

This childlike interpretation of Jesus' famous saying, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (*Matt. 6: 19*), has a great deal of truth in it. Certain accomplishments in this life take God into account; others are vain, frivolous, and fleeting. There is not room in one life for all the false treasures hidden in the heart and for God as well.

Our Hidden Sins

Coveting is a serious sin just because it is such a subtle temptation. It may not result in any open act of violence, such as purloining, stealing, larceny, fraudulent offense, embezzle-

ment, blackmail, plagiarism, or other unlawful appropriation of property. Coveting may not involve anyone in such scandals as murder, rape, and high treason, or in minor violations like trespassing or disturbing the peace, or even in the social error of a temper tantrum. But coveting smolders unseen within the individual. We recognize it in our own secret knowledge of wrong desires, of greed, of willful possessiveness, in moments of jealousy, bitterness, or deceit, in the realization that we have been absorbed by our own ambitions and have neglected a poorer brother. Thus it is not just the overindulgence of our appetites, but their very presence at the core of our being, that desecrates the temple of the spirit. It is specifically that tendency in us which we ourselves, in moments of retrospect or contemplation, deeply regret.

Disobedience to God is inseparable from a dull ache of dissatisfaction with self. So it is with that undercurrent of secret disobedience to God which we call "coveting." Strange that we should want to hide from God what he knows very well: that we are building altars to other gods and giving him only a secondary place in our lives. For the *last* Commandment, even as the *first*, delves into the individual's basic outlook and innermost *motives*. We have only one life to live: it ought not to be lived for ourselves alone. It belongs to God. And this is why we feel guilty when, in the course of all our busyness and competitive striving for material gain, social prestige, or fame, in our laying up of treasures on earth, in our daydreaming, wishful thinking, and false illusions, we are suddenly confronted with God. We should not be surprised if in that moment we feel every bit as much the culprit caught in the act as we would were we arrested climbing over the fence into a neighbor's field.

We may reasonably say these three things, then, about the Tenth Commandment: first, coveting includes a multitude of *secret sins*; secondly, coveting actually can remain quite respectable, for there is in it no outward breaking of the law; and, finally, coveting has often been the prelude to crime, and, in the light of Old and New Testament alike, is an offense

¹ By Thomas à Kempis; translated by Richard Whitford in 1530; edited by Edward J. Klein. Harper & Brothers. Used by permission.

The Scripture Lesson for June 22

Scripture: *Ex. 20: 17; Luke 12: 13-34*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 20: 17; Luke 12: 13-21, 29-34*

The Golden Text: "Thou shalt not covet."—*Ex. 20: 17.*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 20: 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

(Revised Standard Version)

Luke 12: 13 One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." . . .

²⁹ "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

st God and man. Let us now turn
is last point in our analysis of
in of coveting.

safety Valve

course, these secret sins, or mis-
d desires, which we call coveting,
d be stopped when they first
to mind. If they are allowed to
, grow, and possess a man, in the
they will be more than thoughts
passions. They will erupt into
n.

re again we perceive how the
of Israel reflect a true under-
ing of human nature. A man can-
take a chance on a constant
mulation of pent-up feelings. He
y does not have the spiritual
gth to overcome a dominating
on. Let him only seek to dismiss
small nagging temptations one at
e as they arise, and pray from
o day that God may protect him
evil thoughts. Let him do this
would prevent a sudden confla-
on, as from a great pile of oily
left too long in a corner of the
r.

The Tenth Commandment is there-
the *safety valve* of the law, warn-
man to put out the small fires if
ould avoid the big ones. Many
found deep emotional satisfac-
in the tragedies of Shakespeare
use he seems to understand ex-
how small jealousies could drive
ello to the murder of Desdemona;
Macbeth's ambition could sud-
y become horribly perverted; how
up desires could be ignited into a
e of passion. Many of the fine
equies in these plays dwell on the
of regret, on a man's lost vision,
his estrangement from his fellow
tures and from God himself. The
of all this tragic coveting is ever
same:

"O, now, for ever
rewell the tranquil mind! fare-
well content!"

realizing, then, where continued
lgence in unhealthy emotions may
we are wise to insist on the curb-
of these emotions at the source
ere they arise, in the heart. Thus
may forestall unrighteous be-
or. Calvinistic discipline in this
rd is not out of place. But how
to be used? Are we going to curb
wrong feelings because we are
d" individuals, or because we are
ristian" people and have a stand-
to uphold? In other words, are

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between stealing and coveting?
2. How does the Tenth Commandment differ from the preceding ones?
How does it differ from the First Commandment?
3. How is the parable of the Rich Man applied to coveting?
4. Can obedience to this Commandment help us to keep the other nine?

we going to rely on our own strength
and give ourselves credit for the ac-
complishment?

Obviously, such a resolve would
make for a strained type of piety, the
kind that Jesus was quick to condemn.
It would lead us far from the spirit
of the law and from the loving ad-
monition that tells us we are all sin-
ners and by ourselves quite incapable
of perfection. (*Rom. 3:23.*) It is
helpful to know our own limitations
as human beings and to realize at the
same time that, as God's creatures,
we have his promise that he will up-
hold us in times of temptation if we
will believe in his love.

Thus, however difficult it may have
seemed to us at first to obey the
Tenth Commandment, we see now two
important truths: (1) It was put in
the Decalogue for our protection, en-
couraging us to arrest wrong desires
before they are expressed in offensive
or criminal action; and (2) it is a
Commandment that can be obeyed
only as we realize our sinfulness and
increasingly rely on God's fatherly
care both before and during periods
of personal crisis.

Our Will Is Not Enough

We have no reason to be content
with our behavior, even if it upholds
rigorously eight out of the Ten Com-
mandments. The obligation to love
God and to put unworthy desires far
from us demands the deepest conse-
cration and humility, for our love
must be measured in contrast to God's
love and to the life of his Son poured
out in sacrifice for mankind. God's
amazing love to men in Christ is free
and certainly undeserved. It bids us
regard the needs of others, sympa-
thize with suffering, and show patience
under adversity. It rules out selfish
desires. It requires a basic attitude
that will dominate our entire being,
an attitude of giving rather than tak-
ing, and of thankfulness rather than
covetousness.

This is no light task, but we are not
doing it alone. The Word of God is
our mirror, and we see there our need
for redemption and for the constant

re-examination of our motives. Al-
though we can never achieve the
purity of heart required from the first
to the last Commandment and in the
Beatitudes, we know that through the
power of God, through prayer and
reliance on his will, we are enabled
better to reflect his presence in our
hearts:

Yet, Lord, restore Thine image; hear my
call;
And though my hard heart scarce to
Thee can groan,
Remember that, Thou once didst
write in stone.

—George Herbert.

BOOK REVIEW

I Believed, by Douglas Hyde.
(G. P. Putnam's Sons. 312 pages.
\$3.50.)

I Believed is an autobiography. As a
lay preacher in the Methodist Church
in England, Hyde became baffled by
the problems of employment and se-
curity. For twenty years he gave him-
self completely to Communistic activ-
ity as the best outlet for his energies.
Absorbed in its thought, he believed
he "could get on perfectly well with-
out God." It was a real adventure to
share in the sufferings of other Party
members, and belonging to a heroic
fellowship thrilled him.

Disillusionment comes, and he re-
volts against dictation from Moscow,
untruthful practices, and loose sex
conduct in the Party. He turns to the
music, art, and crafts of the Middle
Ages; this, with Catholic literature
and the quiet of a church where he is
alone, gives a sense of peace. Finally
he breaks with the Communist Party
and becomes a Roman Catholic, be-
cause he finds purity, honesty, and
freedom in Catholic circles.

The utter absence of any reference
to Scripture, and to Christ, either per-
sonal or historical, raises doubt as to
whether or not he had a Christian con-
version experience. It may explain
why he did not return to the Protes-
tant Church.—Robert Buche.

Lesson 13—CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT

FOR the past ten weeks we have been studying the Ten Commandments. In the case of each Commandment we have not limited our discussion to the meaning of the original law of Moses; instead, we have interpreted the Commandments also from the point of view of the teachings of Jesus. Jesus has opened to us the meaning of Old Testament Scripture. All along we have been studying Old Testament morality from the perspective of the New. Our study of the Ten Commandments has been, therefore, an introduction to the whole of Biblical ethics. The lesson today is the concluding one in this series, and in it we are considering *the central principle of the ethics of Jesus*. In this final lesson we therefore take our stand squarely upon the New Testament understanding of what makes a good moral life.

Jesus summed up the entire law in the two love commandments—loving God with all one's heart, and loving one's neighbor as oneself. These two directives were indeed a drastic simplification of the duties we owe to God. The Old Testament contains 613 different laws, regulating both inner attitude and actual behavior under a variety of circumstances. The faithful Jew knew he must obey every one of these rules if he wanted to be righteous and to help make Israel a righteous nation. In his teaching, Jesus selects two commandments from the Scriptures, one from Deuteronomy and the other from Leviticus, and tells us that obedience to these two is all that God requires.

Two Meanings of "Love"

But what do the love commandments mean? This little word "love" has been used in so many senses that we cannot at once say what is the meaning of loving God and loving our neighbor. In our usage the word "love" ranges widely in its meaning, all the way from loving something so much that we grab it for ourselves, no matter what the consequences to others, to loving someone or some worthwhile cause so much that we would even face suffering and death for the sake of the person or the cause. These meanings are opposites, yet the same word covers them both.

Think about these two meanings of "love": To love means, first of all, to *want*, seek, desire, or crave. Thus, we love good food and fine music. In this sense of the word, we say men are motivated by the love of success, by the love of money, by the love of honor or reputation, and so forth. Such love seeks some benefit. It is possible to love God in this way. "What is the chief end of man?" "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever," in other words to love God. According to this interpretation, "You shall love God" means: You shall seek God with your whole heart, and with all your soul's desiring you shall desire union and fellowship with him, so that there is no room left for you to desire any-

This lesson was written by PAUL RAMSEY, of the Department of Religion, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.

thing else. To love God means to seek in him fulfillment of our own being. Therefore, love in this first sense means that we passionately desire something for ourselves. It may be an evil desire, or it may be the good desire of wanting fellowship with God.

But we should not love our neighbors this way! A Christian does not love his neighbor simply because he wants something from him, or because he desires to gain self-fulfillment from doing him some good. He loves his neighbor *for his neighbor's sake*. In the second commandment, where love is directed toward the neighbor, the word "love" does not mean wanting or desiring him. It means *giving* or bestowing some benefit, and this is the second meaning of the word. We may desire certain good things *for our neighbor*, but our neighbor himself we love with a good will that wishes to give him every good thing he needs.

Yet it is difficult to see how we can be commanded to love God in the sense of giving him anything. He is the source of all good and the ground of all being. Whatever we offer him is his own already. He is not a deficient, limited being who, like our neighbor in need, would be helped by what we do. Thus, it seems that we should not love our neighbors with the desiring love we may direct toward God, and on the other hand that we cannot love God with the helpful good will that our neighbors need from us. In what sense, then, is the same word "love" used in both love commandments?

Faithfulness

An answer to this question may be found by interpreting Scripture with Scripture. There is another idea throughout the Bible that provides a clue to an understanding of love to God and man. It is the word "faithfulness," or "fidelity." In most passages in the Bible where the word "love" is used, the words "faithfulness" or "fidelity" may be read instead. "I shall be faithful to the Lord my God." "You shall be faithful to your neighbor as to yourself." Loving God and neighbor means fidelity to them. In this way the word "love" has not many meanings.

The whole Bible proclaims the faithfulness of God. In giving the Commandments God promised to show "kindness" to the thousand generation of those who love me and keep my commands" (Ex. 20:6). The word "kindness" used here really means "faithfulness." And throughout the Bible in most cases where the words "kindness," "loving-kindness," and "mercy" are used in the King James Version, we should understand the Scripture better by using the word "faithfulness." In the covenant with the nation of Israel, "loving God" and "loving neighbor" have but one meaning: You shall be faithful to him, even as he is faithful to you. The burden of the Biblical message is then, that men are saved by the faithfulness of God; and that they are commanded, as their proper response, to have fidelity toward God and toward man.

"You have been told, O man, that the Lord is good,
And what the Lord requires of you is only to do justice, and to love kindness [faithfulness],
And to walk humbly with your God."
—Micah 6:8

To God and Man

Through this word "faithfulness" we see how the two meanings of "love" can be reconciled with each other. We see that loving God and loving man binds us in one bundle of love in faithfulness to them. There are then, no special *religious* duties to

¹ From *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, edited by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Published, 1931. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

guished from our *ethical* obliga-

is true that faithfulness to God
des the gratitude and thankful-
which is the source of our faith-
ness to our neighbors. But love for
means identifying our wills with
will for mankind. Loving God pri-
ly means obeying him, and he
mands us to love one another.
ever seriously undertakes to love
will be driven to love his neigh-
To love God means to be con-
ed, as he is concerned, about sav-
men from their affliction and from
sin.

Paul twice summarizes the entire
in terms of one commandment,
for neighbor (*Rom. 13: 9; Gal.*
7). In this he was not disagreeing
Jesus' summary in two command-
ts, for love for neighbor depends
ove for God, and love for God
uptly bends our wills in the neigh-
s direction. The measure and
dard for how we should love our
hbor is derived from God's love
us and for our neighbor.

in the Scripture passages from the
epel and the First Letter of John
have the finest statement of New
ament ethics: "In this is love, not
we loved God but that he loved
(*I John 4: 10, R. S. V.*) Since
is love, we should love. In Christ
has taught us the full meaning of
love required of Christ's disciples.
stians need not exercise them-
es over various pious methods for
vating their own love for God.
only way to love God is to love
y single individual for whom
st died, loving him as Christ has
d us. "This is my commandment,
you love one another as I have
d you." (*John 15: 12, R. S. V.*)

Other Commandment

Jesus was not the first to summarize
aw in terms of the love command-
ts. This was a familiar practice
ng the rabbis in his day. In Luke's
unt of Jesus' teaching it was the
er, not Jesus, who quoted this
mary. Jesus simply approved
t he said. Every good Jew knew
the high points of the Scriptures
reached in these verses.

we can grasp the radical departure
esus' teachings and practice only
e pay attention to the quite dif-
at use Jesus made of this sum-
y. He said to the lawyer, "Do this,
you will live" (*Luke 10: 28,*
R. S. V.), without mentioning any

Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to love our neighbor *for his own sake*, simply because he is the person God has given us a chance to help? How do we try to avoid this responsibility?
2. What does it mean to be "faithful" to God? What does it mean to be "faithful" in our duty toward our neighbor?
3. Does the radical rule of Jesus, whereby we have only one commandment to obey, make it easier or more difficult to uphold the requirements of Christian ethics?

other commandment still to be
obeyed. For him there was no other
commandment greater, and none still
to be considered in determining what
people should do. He did not say, like
the rabbis, that we are to love *and*
also still do no work on the Sabbath
Day if it can be avoided. The work
he did on the Sabbath in curing peo-
ple of long-standing afflictions could
easily have been postponed until the
sun went down. Plainly, then, only

love for men determined what he
should do. Jesus fulfilled the law, but
he finished legalism, which thought of
the law in terms of many separate
duties to be imposed. If we keep the
Commandments, we shall abide in
Christ's love; but Christ's new com-
mandment is his *one* commandment:
"that you love one another; even as I
have loved you" (*John 13: 34,*
R.S.V.). "This do, and you will live."
(*Luke 10: 28, R.S.V.*)

The Scripture Lesson for June 29

Scripture: *Mark 12: 28-34; John 13: 34, 35; 15: 10-14*
(printed in full)

The Golden Text: "A new commandment I give to you, that
you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love
one another."—*John 13: 34.*

(Revised Standard Version)

Mark 12: 28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; ³³ and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

* * * * *

John 13: 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

* * * * *

Ch. 15: 10 "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you."

BOOKS

for Christian Study



WHY AND HOW WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE

By Daniel T. Niles

(Harper & Brothers. 1951. 121 pages. \$1.50)

THESE FOUND THE WAY

Edited by David W. Soper

(The Westminster Press. 1951. 175 pages. \$2.50)

(To be studied together)

FOR the first time since the start of our "Books for Christian Study" course we are recommending two books that are to be studied together. Each complements the other in an unusual way: *That They May Have Life* gives the reasons why the gospel of Jesus Christ should be proclaimed to meet the needs of today's world; *These Found the Way* gives us thirteen autobiographical illustrations of modern American men and women who have responded to the proclamation and have found in Christ the way to meaningful life. Dr. Soper gives us a "casebook" for the principles eloquently set forth by Mr. Niles.

As you know if you have used this "Books" course before, we provide material on these books in both *Crossroads* and *Westminster Teacher* magazine. The purpose of the material in each magazine is different. In *Crossroads* we try to direct your *private study* of the books, so that you will understand them and can discuss them intelligently with other friends who have read them. Then in *Westminster Teacher* we provide material to guide this *group discussion* of the books.

In *Crossroads* this quarter the two books will be analyzed separately, though we shall show ways in which they are related. In *Westminster Teacher* the correlation will be the central point of the article.

The Gospel We Proclaim

It will be helpful first for you to understand the purpose and plan of *That They May Have Life*, by Daniel T. Niles. He sets this forth in his introduction. It is a book for all people concerned about evangelism and not just for those whose field happens to be administered by a church board of missions.

Note the objective of the book as stated on p. 12. What is the "primary reality" we know about the world? What is our task in relation to it? What does it mean to "follow Jesus"?

CHAPTER 1—THE GOSPEL. What is the meaning of the word "Kerygma"? (It is defined in the glossary on p. 121.) The key word in the definition is "proclamation." The gospel is *the announcement of an event*: the Lord God has come to men. Note the distinction between an idea and an event. (P. 19.) What does the event demand of us? How has this deed of God, this event, changed "the very structure of society"? Is it not that in Christ God battled with the power of evil and conquered it?

What does it mean for us to share Christ's victory over evil? (1) It means that in Christ's victory the true nature of evil is exposed; see last paragraph of p. 21 and p. 22 (2) It means

that sin is contrary to the new nature that Christ gives us, so that to do it is not our natural desire under Christ. We still do wrong, but when we do we know we are not expressing true selves. (3) Therefore, when sin we ask for forgiveness and by receiving it receive that "growing power of life which is the hallmark of child of God." (P. 23.)

Why is the resurrection of Jesus the distinctive fact about Christianity? (P. 25.) What does it mean "to live in a world where Jesus is risen"? (Pp. 26-32.) Why must we have a personal encounter with Christ before the proofs of his resurrection are convincing for us?

At this point you may want to call some of the "encounters" described in Dr. Soper's book, *These Found the Way*. For examples, pp. 36, 80, 113 and 114, and 128 of that book.

CHAPTER 2—THE WORLD. The author analyzes human need in terms of the temptations of Jesus. Do you agree that man's primary need is to know himself as a son of God? (P. 3) What disputes that knowledge in our world today? But how is this knowledge dependent upon the proclamation of the gospel rather than upon an innate sense of human dignity?

The gospel recognizes man's need

read "and then puts a question against it." (P. 36.) How? See second paragraph on p. 37. The author also delivers man "from his bondage to results." (P. 38.) Read carefully the striking statement from the Amsterdam Assembly (p. 38) and consider its implications. How can religion be misused? (Last paragraph, p. 39.) Note summary of this section on p. 40. Jesus' method for meeting man's needs was to show that the gospel encompasses every area of life. He recognized man's real needs and met them. Do you agree that man's real needs are as Daniel Niles describes on pp. 45, 46? In this connection recall Hyatt Waggoner's statement in *These Found the Way* that Ernest Hemingway's novels had a religious influence on him because they revealed the real emptiness of human life. (Pp. 146, 147.) What was it in Jesus that made him able to meet these needs? It was the love embodied in the proclamation: "God is Lord. Do you see the distinction between Lord and leader on pp. 46-50? What will Jesus do to the man who acknowledges that Jesus is Lord?" (P. 47.) How does he drive men to see results in their true light? (P. 48.) Is this a new interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount for you?

CHAPTER 3—THE EVANGELIST. This chapter shows how the method of message of Jesus must also be the method and message of the evangelist. Men and women are called to this task of "preparing" people. What does this mean? (See p. 54.) What does it mean to be slaves for Christ, and how does this experience come to us? (P. 54.) How does God keep us faithful in our witnessing? (P. 56.) What are the three levels of life, and how is evangelism related to them? (Pp. 58, 59.) How is a Christian school or hospital an evangelistic agency? (P. 60.) Do you understand the place of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the life of the church, as Daniel Niles explains it on p. 61? Dr. Niles's expression of concern about the personal commitment of his students to Christ (p. 63) has implications for Christian education. In what ways can the home and church prepare people to "make their individual response to Jesus"? What can the home and church not do?

CHAPTER 4—THE CHURCH. Mr. Niles describes the life and function of the Church in terms of the Trinity. God creates his Church; it is not the work of a man or of men. It comes into being by the proclamation of the gospel and the receiving of it. (Read in *These Found the Way* how this fact became alive for Bishop Gerald Kennedy: p. 114.) How does the analogy of the marriage relationship help you to understand the Christian's relationship to Christ? (P. 69.) What does Mr. Niles mean when he says that "the Church is not merely an instrument of evangelism but part of the Evangel itself"? (P. 69.)

The second half of this chapter describes the Church. What was significant about the choice of twelve disciples? (P. 73.) What is the "unity that already exists" in the Church? (P. 74.) How can it be demonstrated today? How can the diversity of the churches be justified? In what way is evangelism the expression of the Church's holiness? Note the threefold relationship of the Church to the world. (Pp. 76-78.) How is the Church "Catholic"? What is the authority of the Church? What is the "freedom" and what is the "bondage" of the Church? (P. 80.)

CHAPTER 5—THE TASK. In pursuing his task the Christian is converted to three aspects of the work: p. 83. Do you know Christians who have not been converted to some of these parts of the task? What is the one question that all men must confront in the gospel? (P. 84.) Do you understand each of the five characteristics of our task? (Pp. 84-90.)

Do you understand the three kinds of time of which Mr. Niles speaks? His illustrations are helpful (see p. 92). The importance of this concept for evangelism is that the Church should be able to see what it is that God wants done in our day, at any particular time or in any particular place. It is also important because we need to realize that even these times of tempest are *God's time*, as the story on p. 95 makes clear.

CHAPTER 6—THE NON-CHRISTIAN. This chapter will be most helpful to us if we try to relate the principles demonstrated in relation to Buddhism to our task of evangelism in America. We must ask, therefore, What are the non-Christian faiths that we confront



DAVID WESLEY SOPER
editor of *These Found the Way*

among our friends and neighbors? Secularism—life without God—is certainly the dominant one. (Incidentally, do you see how modern secularism is very much like Buddhism? See the definition of Buddhism on p. 103.) Another is the cults that are offshoots of Christianity, such as Christian Science, Unity, and others. A third is hard to define. It is the misunderstanding and perversion of the gospel that takes place within the Church itself. In some places it might be the shallow liberal optimism about man and society that has permeated much of our thinking. In other areas it may be the narrowness, against which so many of the writers in *These Found the Way* revolted. And, of course, it is always whatever perversion we ourselves make of the gospel because of our personal blindness and sin.

To people practicing these non-Christian religions, we come with the gospel. How do we approach them? Outline the steps Mr. Niles gives us, noting the limitation pointed out at the bottom of p. 99.

At the end we return to the point made in the first chapter. When we ask, "Why evangelize men for the gospel?" the complete answer is not in any of those given on pp. 109-112. The answer is simply, "Because Jesus Christ is Lord." See pp. 113, 114.

Finding "the Way"

Dr. Soper's book, *These Found the Way*, is easier to analyze because we have laid the groundwork through a

careful study of Daniel Niles's "theology of evangelism." The thirteen people who tell their stories in this symposium have this one thing in common: each person has transcended some struggle in connection with his religious faith, and each has surrendered to Jesus Christ as Lord.

We want to comprehend both the unity and diversity of these stories. For this purpose, each account may be subjected to certain questions:

1. What was the experience in life that drove this person to Christ?

2. What (or who) were some of the influences that led him to Christ?

3. What kind of "encounter" did he have?

4. What has the gospel meant to his life?

5. What does his experience mean to me?

1. THE EXPERIENCES IN LIFE THAT LED TO THE CALL OF CHRIST. Several of these people have some things in common in this regard:

a. Some were atheists who found this lack of faith unsatisfying and demoralizing: Davidman, Gresham, Walsh, Soper.

b. Some revolted against a conservative religious life in their childhood: Whitcomb, Snavelly, Kennedy, Ferré.

c. Some were in the depths of despair when Christ found them: Candler, Gresham, Snavelly, Jordan, Ferré.

d. Others came to him in a gradual way, though each knows of a decisive "encounter": Kennedy, Waggoner, Johnson, Soper.

Looking more closely at these experiences, let us ask certain questions about them. Why was atheism dissatisfying? (See these references in the various stories: pp. 15, 25, 67, 72, 123, 165, 167.) Why did Communism seem at first to satisfy the needs that Christianity would meet? (Pp. 19, 66-71.)

What was wrong with the way their church and their homes handled the religious doubts of Miss Whitcomb and the others? (See pp. 30, 96 and 97, 106, 111, 132 and 133.) What is it in the Church today that has brought these people back to it? (Pp. 34 and 35, 99, 111 and 112, 135.)

2. THE INFLUENCES THAT LED MEN TO CHRIST. It is important to realize that Christ himself brings men to him. We do not arrive at our faith through the exercise of human reason-

ing or by anything that *we* do. Nor is the revelation of God in Christ received from the study of great books, or from nature and art. The revelation is in one Book. Yet God uses various means to bring us to the Bible and to the saving faith that we need. Looking back on the experiences, we see God's hand in them at every turn. Joy Davidman expresses this fact most explicitly—pp. 14, 16, 23; see also what Chad Walsh says, p. 119.

3. THE DECISIVE ENCOUNTER. It will be wise for us to look at each decisive encounter with Christ that is described in this book. We want to mark the significance of the fact that the encounter was necessary, to note the varied ways in which Christ meets men, and to see the nature of the faith that he has awakened in each person.

Joy Davidman—p. 23. Describe what happened to her in your own words. How did she arrive at "orthodox Christian theology"? (P. 25.) What does the Church mean to her? (P. 26.)

Mildred E. Whitcomb—p. 36. What does religion mean to her? What does she see as her need? What does she find wrong with the Church today?

Joseph Wittkofski—p. 48. Note that there is no single moment of change in his story. Why did he leave the Roman Catholic Church? What is his view of the Anglican Church?

Asa G. Candler, Jr.—p. 55. What unusual experience did God use to bring this man to the point of self-surrender? How does Candler set forth the essentials of the Christian faith? (Pp. 60-62.)

William Lindsay Gresham—pp. 75-80. How did the divinity of Christ at last become real to him? Why does the gospel seem true to him? (P. 77.)

Lee Jordan—p. 91. Note here the influence of a sympathetic pastor and good preaching. What did Jordan learn from Soper?

Frank R. Snavelly—pp. 98-100. How did the war show him his need of God? What did Paul Elmer More teach him? What does he believe about human nature? (Pp. 100 and 101.)

Gerald Kennedy—p. 114. What is the "decisive word [that] had been given me to deliver"? What does the atonement mean to him? (P. 115.) Why does he "no longer . . . argue with men about the deity or divinity of Jesus"? (P. 115.)

Chad Walsh—pp. 126-128. No how only Christianity answered the three questions. What did his study of the New Testament do for him? What was the central piece in the "jigsaw puzzle" of Christian doctrine?

Nels F. S. Ferré—pp. 132, 135, 147. These three steps were, of course, part of the same working of God. What made the "third conversion" particularly difficult? What has prayer meant to him?

Hyatt Howe Waggoner—pp. 147. Trace the gradual and "sometimes what painful" steps in his conversion. Why is science inadequate as a way of life? How does his adult faith differ from the faith of his childhood? (P. 149.)

Wingate M. Johnson, M.D.—pp. 153, 154. Compare Dr. Johnson's approach through science with Daniel Niles's approach Chapter 6 of *They May Have Life*. What do the words mean in relation to religious faith: "inherited immunity," "passive immunity," "active immunity"?

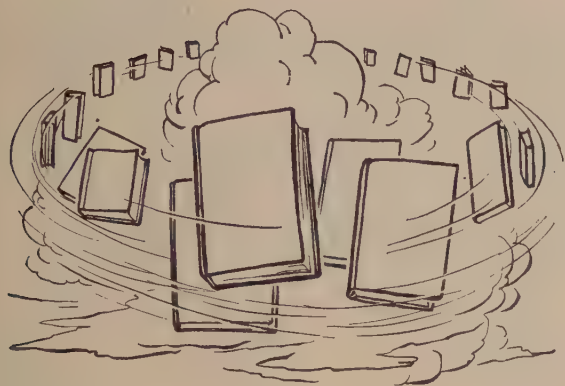
David Wesley Soper—pp. 167-171. What were the developments that brought about his conversion from atheism? What does it mean to him that "repentance follows faith"? (P. 169.) What are some of the forces of immorality that he discovered?

4. WHAT THE GOSPEL HAS MEANT TO ME. You can take each of the references just given and discover the answer to this fourth question, "What has the gospel meant to his life?" Particularly impressive in this respect are the stories of Asa Candler, Jr., William Gresham, Gerald Kennedy, and Nels Ferré.

A question to be raised in this connection concerns the attitude of the people toward the Church. Do most of them show an adequate understanding of the nature and work of the body of Christ? Where they do not, do the individuals concerned reflect the general ignorance of church people on this point? Remember what Daniel Niles has taught in his book about the place of the Church in God's plan.

5. WHAT THESE EXPERIENCES MEAN TO ME. This, of course, is the question that you alone can answer. Which of the thirteen accounts has been most meaningful for you? Why? How? In what ways has God been leading you to the decisive encounter? Whom has he used for this purpose?

Books in Review



Books and supplies listed here and elsewhere in this magazine are carefully checked for their availability and price, but unfortunately there is a considerable time between original listing and publication. For this reason prices are subject to change.

For Older Adults

These Harvest Years, edited by Janet H. Baird. (Doubleday & Company, Inc. 300 pages. \$3.49.)

All now in their middle years of life, all with parents, all engaged in activities that bring them in contact with older people will profit from reading this book.

Covering all the major aspects of preparation for the later years of life—health both physical and mental, finances, community services, employment, and utilization of leisure time, level, and spiritual development, the twelve experts who have prepared the individual sections give the reader a comprehensive and interesting view of what old age may be like.

The outstanding message of the book is that all of us even now have open to us manifold courses of action to be taken to make old age happy, useful, and rewarding.

Although the subjects covered are, in many instances, technical, the articles themselves are written for the layman. The sections on health by Dr. O. Spurgeon English and Dr. Ernest P. Boas are invaluable. Women will delight in Miss Baird's article, "How to Look as Good as You Feel" (and men can profit as well).

Clergymen and other church officers will use Miss Ollie A. Randall's section "What Your Community Can Do

to Help" to advantage, and all Presbyterian readers should study carefully "The Answer of Christian Faith," by Rev. Joseph R. Sizoo.—*John Park Lee.*

Studying the Beatitudes

Ladder of Light, by Harold Blake Walker. (Fleming H. Revell Company. 192 pages. \$2.25.)

Dr. Walker, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Evanston, Illinois, gives here a challenging book that probes the spiritual needs of men in our time with a reverent insight into the mind of Christ. It is a study of the Beatitudes, and Dr. Walker points out that each Beatitude is a specific suggestion by which men can approach Christ, and in that approach experience the transforming power of the Master for those who seriously seek him.

The Beatitudes are "a creed for a one-man revolution of inner change and repentance."

Dr. Walker, in every page, is really confronting men with the relevance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are more satisfied with the social evils and personal indulgences of our time than we are willing to follow the spiritual challenges and disciplines of Jesus so richly suggested in the Beatitudes.

Very impressive is the winsome, wooing quality of Dr. Walker's writing, so aware of the poverty of human life without Christ, so eager for man to find spiritual regeneration and renewal through the love and cleansing power of that One who gave to mankind. "The Beatitudes."—*Alexander B. Allison.*

Is This the Way?

The Way to Security, by Henry C. Link. (Doubleday & Company, Inc. 224 pages. \$2.50.)

Writing with his usual admirable clarity and showing frequent insight, the author expounds a laudable thesis—that our American preoccupation with security is tied to desire for material gain, and that real security can never be attained in that way.

Yet the book is studded with half-truths and prejudices. In sweeping condemnations the Church is charged with failing to teach Christian ethics, ignoring sin in our midst, and furthering Communism. The churches evidently could correct such alleged deficiencies by teaching American history through the Sunday schools!

The impression that marriage troubles are solved by having children was evidently gained partly by reading "the stories about marital problems in such magazines as *McCall's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Good Housekeeping*." One could balance this inaccurate impression with other magazines: *Marriage and Family Living* or *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.—*John Charles Wynn.*

An Idealist Wins

The Brief Year, by Grace Jamison Breckling. (The Westminster Press. 281 pages. \$3.00.)

With tender humor and a lively savoring of the details of small-town life four decades ago, Mrs. Breckling writes the story of a crusading young school principal who wrestles with the religious intolerance, stingy purses, and general meanness of Middle Grove's adult population. An unsympathetic wife and a trio of gossips make his task no easier, but his flaming enthusiasm for truth and beauty and for the religious implications of education kindles an answering fire within the young people. As he leaves, on the eve of the First World War, we are assured that his seeming failure will be, in long perspective, only incidental to his real success. Derek Wyngate's struggle comes to us through the enraptured eyes of his most understanding pupil, a girl who passes in this brief year from childhood to womanhood under the touch of first love.—*Dorothy Ballard.*

Program Guide FOR ADULT GROUPS

Ingredients for a Happy Marriage

By John Schott

JESUS loved children. With penetrating insight he once boldly affirmed that only people who become as little children would be worthy of his Kingdom. At one time, when his disciples were impatient with some doting parents, Jesus reproved them, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." In the eyes of our Lord, children were precious; there was something about them—a note of artless sincerity, a spirit of innocence, a readiness to learn, that appealed to him.

Most young couples share with Jesus this same fine sentiment about children. In fact, a person must be singularly callous and unfeeling not to be strangely moved at the sight of a group of children joyously playing in the streets or bounding out of school at the close of day. There is a graciousness, a lilt, a spontaneity and exuberance to children that delight us all.

A word of caution must, however, be mentioned. Children *do* present problems. On this score I have no illusions, for I am the father of two adolescents. Having passed through the fiery furnace, I can speak with authority. When my son was eight years of age, I referred to him as the "Menace," and I know in part what Plato, the ancient philosopher, meant when he said, "Of all beasts, boys are the most unmanageable."

Children do present problems, often heartaches, and many parents, lacking a rugged constitution, a sense of humor, or a sufficient capacity for patience, wilt under the strain. Someone has very cleverly said that parenthood is like answering the following advertisement:

"WANTED: Young, strong, healthy couple, willing to work all day and night if necessary, loving and caring for one or more children. No time off, no pay, just satisfaction. No references required."

Having children is no bed of roses. It certainly does curtail one's freedom. More than that, it requires a considerable financial outlay. In a rural economy children have always been an economic asset, but today, when most of our people live in urban areas, often crowded together in dingy and exorbitantly priced apartments, with the cost of living constantly soaring, many young people naturally are fearful about rearing a family.

The unsettled political situation throughout the world does not help matters either. Thoughts of begetting children for cannon fodder are very disquieting, to say the least.

The Risk Is Worth-while

Although the future does, indeed, present all the aspects of a turbulent and uncharted sea, yet most healthy, energetic young couples want children. Well do they know that without them life can easily become dull, monotonous, and boring. "Having children," someone has said, "is like having a ringside seat at the greatest show on earth." The prospect of a three-ring circus in one's home is, I must admit, somewhat alarming. Yet it is true that children are a never-ending source of interest, expanding life for us, and saving us from becoming self-centered, trivial, frivolous, and individualistic in our thinking.

"Children are a heritage of the Lord," says the psalmist. According to this spiritual seer they are a great

blessing, an enrichment from God. Such a statement is axiomatic, for it is a well-attested fact that children do bring out the best in people, making them tender and sympathetic, gracious and thoughtful, eagerly and lovingly solicitous for the highest good of their offspring.

Children also give purpose and meaning to life. With the coming of little ones, parents are compelled to do long-term planning, and thus are saved from a feeling of futility and uselessness. With more mouths to feed, more interests to satisfy, more problems to solve, their thinking no longer can be self-centered. A new frame of reference, a new perspective, a new focal point is given them. Slowly it dawns upon them that there is only one sure and only road to true happiness, as Jesus said, in losing one's life for others.

Edward T. Sullivan's famous tribute to mothers shows how this new point of reference works. In an article he once wrote:

"When God wants an important thing done in this world, or a wrong righted, he goes about it in a very singular way. He does not release his thunderbolts or stir up his earthquakes. He simply has a tiny, helpless babe born, perhaps in a very obscure home, perhaps of a very humble mother. Then he puts the idea or purpose into the mother's heart, she puts it into the baby's mind, and then—God waits."

A little child seems so helpless,

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He's the most popular father on the block. The others are busy making money."

insignificant, and yet, who knows, he might be the hope of the world. It is for him that parents, therefore, feel they must live. Through him, life is given meaning and significance for them.

By such a projection of ourselves into the future, we also attain a certain type of immortality. All of us who take life seriously, who by bitter struggle have achieved definite standards and ideals, are eager to have them perpetuated. In this we differ from all other animals; we do not live for the present alone. A life's span is too short for us; we seek fulfillment through our sons and daughters. As thinking, hoping beings, we long to transmit our cherished principles and purposes to generations yet unborn.

The Boon of a Happy Home

In the second chapter of Genesis we read that God said it was not good for man to be alone. Marriage is ordained, planned by God, "for the well-being and happiness of mankind," says

our Presbyterian marriage ceremony. Many people have not experienced that great joy. There is something very pathetic in the statement of the great Russian novelist, Turgenev, who said he would give all his fame and all his genius if there were only one woman who cared whether he came home late to dinner. Loneliness is a frightful affliction. Another brilliant writer living in luxurious quarters did not hesitate to admit that she dreaded going home at night to her empty apartment. Often she deliberately went on trips or imposed herself on her friends rather than stay in her apartment, where the walls seemed to be closing in on her.

What a boon an adoring and loving husband or wife can be! But what a greater joy it is to have a family whose hearts are knit together in mutual helpfulness and respect! Theodore Roosevelt had just such a family; the stories about their life together are legendary. That is why he could send the following telegram to his wife on

the evening he lost the presidency on the Bull Moose ticket: "You will see by the newspapers that I am defeated, but nothing matters to me as long as I have you and the children."

A normal person enjoys the friendship of adults. But one's own children can be much more fun than grownups, for they harbor no grudges or jealousies; they are pliable, joyous, and idealistic. Said Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Pretty much all the honest truth-telling there is in the world is done by children." Those whose lives are constantly exposed to the laughter of little children, those who are privileged to enjoy their companionship, are indeed blessed. By contact with their young hearts and minds a person does not easily succumb to crabbed old age.

Children Provide Stability

Parents, through their children, achieve fulfillment. They also enjoy a blessed companionship which enables them vicariously to relive their youth and ward off the encroachments of old age. But children also give stability to a home. From time to time, statistics are published about our rising divorce rate. In one of them we are told that two thirds of all divorces come from the one sixth of the families that have no children.

According to a recent study made by one of the largest insurance companies in America, the more children in a family, the less likely is it that the husband and wife will end up in the divorce court. The carefully compiled statistics are as follows:

No children—divorces	15.3 per 1,000
One child—divorces	11.6 per 1,000
Two children—divorces	7.6 per 1,000
Three children—divorces	6.5 per 1,000
Four or more children—divorces	4.6 per 1,000

Having children does not guarantee that a couple will make a success of marriage, but it does minimize the risk involved in matrimony. Young people should not delay too long in making plans for their families. The idea of waiting until there is more money in the bank, or for a better job, is a very materialistic point of view. The early years of most marriages are a struggle, but such hardships tend to cement the lives of a

husband and wife as nothing else in life can do.

The late President Harper, of the University of Chicago, married when he was only nineteen. He was a very precocious young man and had already received his doctor's degree. To one of his intimate friends he admitted that during the first five or six years of their married life there were times when neither of them had enough cash to buy a stamp to mail a letter. But in utter sincerity he said, "There was never one moment when either of us regretted our marriage." So it is often with parents who do not delay too long in having children. There is, of course, a financial risk involved, but the compensating joys far outweigh any sacrifices that two young people make in getting their family started.

In one of his well-known stories Seneca tells us of a vain woman who boasted to Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, about her expensive jewels. Cornelia kept the conversation going until her children returned from school. Then with justifiable pride she pointed to her stalwart sons and said, "These are my jewels." Children are precious possessions; they are indeed our jewels. But more than that, they are "a heritage of the Lord," something that will add joy and zest and meaning to life.

A PROGRAM FOR FAMILY WEEK

Considering the ingredients for a happy marriage makes an appropriate topic for National Family Week (May 4-11). This is the kind of program best led by a husband and wife. A lively couple can keep a session going with real interest on the subject of family life. We suggest these steps in planning this meeting:

1. One member of the couple should begin with a brief introductory statement. The article topic, "Ingredients for a Happy Marriage," can be summarized. It ought to be made clear that all the factors in happy marriage will not be considered in one meeting. But some of the high points of Mr. Schott's article can be emphasized. Jesus' attitude toward children, Edward T. Sullivan's insight into the workings of God, Theodore Roosevelt's telegram to his wife might be described.

2. Divide the group into smaller sections of approximately six each. Explain that in the "buzz session" to follow, all the sections will be discussing certain assigned questions for about six minutes at a time.

3. Ask each six to choose a chairman and a reporter. Then they are set to report to the meeting their opinions and answers.

4. Now the couple leading the discussion can assign questions for the buzz session. The same question can be considered by all the little groups of six, or each can be assigned a different one.

5. Questions can be lifted right out of the article, or adapted from thoughts suggested by the article.

For example: How do you explain the correlation between the presence of children and the lower incidence of divorce? How much financial struggle is conducive to married stability? What risks are there in having children today? What do parents learn from their children? What ages of children are the most difficult to cope with? Why?

Add to this list as many other questions as desired.

6. When a halt is called to the first round of discussion, call for the reports from each buzz group. One member of the chairmen team can list important points on a blackboard.

7. As provocative comments are made, allow for free discussion from the floor.

8. Then when all the buzz reporters have been called upon, assign new questions and start the process all over again.

Most organizations find the buzz method provides for a maximum of participation and fun.

SPEAK UP FOR YOUR CHURCH

By John O. Mellin

IDON'T go to church because there are too many hypocrites there." If you are a church member, how do you react to such a statement?

Of course, there is one quick comeback to one who remarks that there are too many hypocrites in the Church for him. Point out that there is always room for one more! Hypocrites are welcome in the Church. It is interesting that people judge the Church by the very criterion which the Church itself keeps alive in the world. The Church is a good place for sinners to be. It is the only institution that admits that it exists to save them.

Speaking of what Christianity offers, Dr. J. S. Whale writes: "There are many religions which know no divine welcome to the sinner until he has ceased to be one. They would first make him righteous, and then bid him welcome to God. But God in Christ first welcomes him, and so makes him penitent and redeems him. The one demands newness of life; the other imparts it."¹

Dr. Whale is speaking here of Christ, the Word of God. And so it can be said that it is the Church which welcomes all sinners and hypocrites and places them before the Word of God in the fellowship of the people of God. If someone says that there are hypocrites in the Church, point

out to him that that is the best place for them to be.

Honest Criticism

Perhaps you are wondering why we approach the subject of one's responsibilities to the Church in this fashion. It is for this reason: Our first responsibility, if we are Christians, is to *believe in* the Church, yes, to be proud of it. We ought to be ready to defend it and explain it in the face of silly criticisms in our present day by those who don't know what the Church is all about. Not that the

¹ From *Christian Doctrine*. Used by permission of the publisher, Cambridge University Press.



Church shouldn't be criticized! But that's *our* job as members. The criterion by which the Church is criticized is maintained by the Church through its gospel. Luther was a monk; John Wesley was an Anglican clergyman. Reform has usually come from within the Church.

What Is the Church?

What, then, is the Church? One definition states: "It is where the Word of God is." That Word of God is always found in the Bible, sacraments, and preaching in the midst of the fellowship of believers. This, then, is the real Universal Church—a communion of worshipers and believers crossing national boundaries and transcending centuries. It is the medium that carries the Christian gospel. It is called "the body of Christ."

This is important to realize in a discussion of the Church. Many times we hear it claimed that we can be Christians outside of the Church. Yet if it weren't for this fellowship of believers carrying the Christian message, no one would be Christian. One doesn't learn of the real meaning of Christianity from history books. Yet Christianity does not reach where the Church has not gone. Perhaps we are now beginning to see some of our responsibility to the Church, if we believe in Christianity at all.

The Church is as a group of "strangers" on the earth. Someone once said that if he seemed to be out of step with the world it was because he was listening to a different drummer. The Church is a communion of those listening to God's beat. Very early in the history of Christianity, a Church leader wrote in the "Letter to Diognetus":

"For the distinction between Chris-

tians and other men is neither country, nor language, nor customs. For they do not dwell in cities in some place of their own, nor do they use any strange variety of dialect nor practice any extraordinary kind of life. This teaching of theirs has not been discovered by the intellect or thought of busy men, nor are they advocates of any human doctrine as some men are. Yet while living in Greek and barbarian cities . . . they show forth the wonderful and confessedly strange character of the constitution of their own citizenship. They dwell in their own fatherlands but as if sojourners in them; they share all things as citizens and suffer all things as strangers. For every country is their fatherland and every fatherland a foreign country."

Now this fellowship is symbolized by every church tower and spire that rises above the sky line of villages, towns, and cities all over the world. These local congregations are all part of the great Universal Church.

A primary responsibility of a Christian, then, to his church is to know it and to be loyal to it. It has its true head in Jesus Christ, the Word of God. It has a history that has outlasted nations and revolutions. It has a power that reaches everywhere.

Your Commitment

When one joins the Presbyterian Church, he is asked this question: "Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world?"

Now this is a meaningless question unless one understands what has gone before in this discussion, i.e., the meaning of the Church and an appreciation of what the Church is all about. One is ready to answer the above in the affirmative only if he believes in the Church and is proud of it.

The new communicant promises "to share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church." This is an answer to the question, "Can a person be a Christian outside of the Church?" In the book *The Christian Answer*, published by the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, Dr. George E. Sweazey writes:

"The water of life, which the Church draws from its Source, is poured into the community. People may have some of this spilled-over inspiration and teaching without ever coming near a church. It can produce noble lives. But those who say, 'I believe in Christianity but not churchianity,' forget that Christianity has never gone where the Church has not gone."

Most of us will recognize this as a true statement. It illustrates the fact that every church was founded as a result of someone's Christian mission. It further points to the fact that a church without a missionary interest is no real church! It is missions which win the world, not revolutions. What we fear most about the Communists today is their missionary zeal. They are present-day missionaries; they are shouting evangelists. They seem to get committed converts faster than any other group outside of the Christian Church. Yet our tradition includes such men as Paul and Silas, who "turned the world upside down." How much "Christian activity" is there in



HISTORIC ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, NEAR WAYNE, PA.

your local church? All true church members are missionaries also.

Dr. George A. Buttrick tells this story: A missionary offering was being taken. One man failed to put anything in the plate, explaining that he didn't believe in missions. The deacon was equal to the situation. "Take some out, then," he said. "It's for the heathen."

We also have a responsibility for stewardship in the Church. "Do you promise . . . to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you?" is part of the question asked Presbyterian communicants. How the word "steward" has deteriorated in meaning! It used to mean "house warden." Now it is most often used to mean a steamship employee. But good or bad stewards can make or break a steamship company. The steward is the one with whom the passengers come in contact. He is the owners' representative. How do we measure up as God's stewards?

In recent years we have been conditioned to large figures. Let me give you some that will indicate how little appreciated is this sense of stewardship. In 1949, approximately these sums were spent in the United States:

Alcoholic beverages—8½ billion

Tobacco—4¼ billion

Contributions to religious bodies—just over 1 billion

Two verses come to mind, the first two in the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Now there are many men who give the church several hundred dollars at income tax time, who are on church rolls, but do not "make diligent use of the means of grace." The means of grace in the Protestant Church include the sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the preaching, the communion and fellowship of believers, and personal Bible reading and study and prayer. Someone has said that Baptism starts the Christian life and the Lord's Supper keeps it going. Baptism is the sign and seal of our decision in the Christian Church. The Lord's Supper is the continuing sign

Planning a Program on the Church

In the Protestant Church the minister is always called upon to point out to laymen what their responsibilities are. Yet in the Protestant Church especially, we believe in the priesthood of all believers. We are all missionaries. We are all apologists. Almost every day the Christian is asked by some skeptic, "Why do you go to church, anyway?" In legal terms, *it is time for us to prepare our briefs.*

Divide the group into the "apologists" and the "skeptics." (*Apologist* does not mean primarily one who acknowledges regret, but one who can justify and defend his position. He knows whom he has believed.)

The skeptics might prepare their attack on the following age-old criticisms:

1. Why do you go to church, anyway? It's just a superstitious organization which never does anything.
2. There are too many hypocrites in the church; so I don't go.
3. I can be a good Christian without going to church. I can worship God walking in the woods on Sunday morning.
4. The church's services and ritual just don't mean anything.
5. I don't believe in missions. The church is always asking for money. Charity begins at home.

Let your "Christian apologists" prepare their defense from the suggestions found in the following material:

This topic adapts easily to role-playing. Choose from among the "skeptics" two or three people to present the challenges in the above five points, as well as others which will occur to them. Choose from the "apologist" group an equal number to be defenders of the faith. Then when they are assembled in the center of the group, allow a bull session to develop on the topic. It might begin with the grousing of one of the skeptics because a church committee meeting has spoiled his friends' evening's plans for bridge. They are shy one player. It leads to "I don't see what she sees in that church rigmarole anyhow." And they're off!

This can be a very practical program. Many Roman Catholics say that we Protestants don't know where we stand. You may know the classic definition of a Protestant by one little boy: "A Protestant is someone who doesn't have to believe anything!" One can't have a responsibility to nothing! This program can help us all to learn where we stand with regard to the church.

that we remember what our membership in Christ means (though, sad to say, many have nothing to remember, for they never knew). Even as the Lord's Supper is a "means of grace," symbolizing our feeding on the Word of God, the preaching also is a means of grace. In the sermon the Word of God is proclaimed. In the fellowship of believers that Word is best understood as among friends who know one another in Christ's Church.

What a great thing, then, the Christian Church is! Giving a gift of money to the Church may seem to be stewardship, but there is more to it. There is a stewardship of time. Part of the stewardship of time is that which is given to worship and prayer in the midst of believers, for here the brotherhood is strengthened and the body of Christ in this world increased.

One may have noticed that we have not mentioned the church's ping pong tables or its bowling alleys. No men-

tion has been made of its dining facilities or dramatic groups. In times past, a church was judged by its equipment and "what it did for the community." Today, when other fellowships are winning converts and other gods are calling for followers, our ping pong tables look a little small. A new appreciation of the meaning of the fellowship to which we belong is opening up to us. Our loyalty to the Church, to its witness and its mission, are coming to the front as the most important matters. The Church can be defended only by faithful, devoted, intelligent believers. This is our responsibility.

It has been said that "no place on earth, where there has not been a Christian Church, could you send your children to a public school or vote in a free election or have your appendix treated." Do you think this is true or not? Now meet your skeptics in defense of the Church and its faith.

This is the second of the four articles which Dr. Gibson is writing for CROSSROADS on observing the Christian year in your adult group. Here he suggests programs for the period from Easter to Pentecost (June 1).

Easter Is Just the Beginning

By George Miles Gibson

THE Christian year mounts to two high peaks of experience—at Christmas and at Easter—the one commemorating the birth, the other the resurrection of our Lord. Often we feel something like a letdown in our churches after the high triumph of Easter Day, and this is understandable. All life moves in rhythms—sleeping and waking, the ebb and flow of the tides, the march of the seasons. It should not then be surprising or too disappointing if the high experiences of our group life are followed by those which are nearer to earth. However, Christianity is meant for the more prosaic and commonplace tasks of day-by-day life as well as for the mountaintops of life experience.

But the group life need not drop like a dud, with all its force spent in the Easter celebrations. The Christian year offers an advantage that will help us in planning well in advance for an interesting and helpful program following Easter. The schedule is this: Lent, strictly speaking, ends the Saturday noon before Easter. The Holy Week drama is complete; Christ has suffered his agony in the Garden, his passion on the cross, and now lies in the tomb. Lent is over.

Then, Easter Day breaks, and the Eastertide season begins. It will continue seven weeks, until Pentecost. Easter is not the close of Lent; it is the beginning of a whole season in which the risen, living Christ becomes the center of our group life.

Your program planning for this season should begin well before Easter, whenever possible, and should start with the thought of the living Christ in today's life. A wide variety of programs is possible around this central theme. The suggestions here are offered as examples only; they

may be adapted, or others substituted. Still other vital programs may be framed around some of the days of the civil calendar that coincide with the season.

In the paragraphs that follow are provided program capsules for the weeks following Easter. These are outlined for the weekly adult group meeting; those groups which meet less often can choose topics from among the ones given here.

The First Sunday After Easter

"*The Peace of the Living Christ*" may be the theme, following the words of Jesus to his disciples, "Peace be unto you," as found in the twentieth chapter of John's Gospel. A book such as *God and the Nations*, edited by Paul Poling,¹ one of our social education leaders, might become the basis for an informative and challenging evening. A guest speaker could be asked to review the book, and the presentation be followed by group discussion. Or members could be assigned chapters to present briefly, with full discussion afterward. The leader should refer to the official study guide, *Let Us Live! for God and the Nations*.² For suggestions of other pamphlet materials and for sample copies of *Social Progress*, write to the Division of Social Education and Action, 830 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa. A table display of such materials could be presented, and the group can be encouraged to become further informed on the difficult problems in this field.

Also, the living Christ offers spiritual peace to individuals in the midst of the conflict situations in the world. The worship for the evening should center around this theme as the participants are led to discover spiritual resources needed today.

Passages from the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel are suited for this worship service. The prayers, like

those on page 330 of *The Book of Common Worship* (1946), ought to express our recognition of the need for true fellowship, out of which peace grows, as well as our acknowledgment that if peace is to be accomplished it must proceed from the will of God.

The Second Sunday After Easter

"*Fellowship with the Living Christ*" offers an evening rich in possibilities. On several occasions after the resurrection the disciples enjoyed with their Lord a renewal of the fellowship they had had with him throughout his ministry. What spiritual, moral, and intellectual content that fellowship with Jesus possessed goes beyond our imagination. We have abused the word fellowship and applied it to any kind of superficial social gathering. Here now is a chance to ask: What is the content of fellowship in our own group? Do we have fellowship for its own sake, or do we find a deeper fellowship through common concern with great things?

The program may be arranged to explore the meaning of real Christian fellowship, extended outward from the group and from the church, through all areas of human life.

For help in this program, look up in your CROSSROADS file the issue for October-December, 1950, and turn to pages 21-23.

Some few special situations could be chosen as areas of special need, such as displaced persons, minority groups, the misunderstood and lonely in our cities—and perhaps within the very shadows of our churches. The worship can center about the shepherd theme, with readings from *I Peter 2: 19-25*, which refers to the Christians as "now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," and from

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¹ Paper, \$1.00; cloth, \$2.00. Available from your nearest Westminster Book Store.

² Price, 50 cents for single copies; 40 cents in quantities of 5 or more to one address. Available from the same store.

the Shepherd's Psalm (the twenty-third). This beautiful poem, so familiar to Christians, is the basis of a lovely little booklet, *The Song of Our Syrian Guest*, by William Allen Knight. This could be presented by a reader.

The Third Sunday After Easter

"Working with the Living Christ" is a good theme for a program on Christian vocation. Not only ministers and missionaries, but all Christians, need a sense of Christian vocation in their lifework. Work is not to be selected purely upon a basis of self-interest, but with a view to the largest use of one's talents in serving the needs of the world. One of the most serious problems we have is that of the separation between men's religious beliefs and their daily jobs.

In working out the program, plans should be made to present opportunities for specifically Christian service. Our Boards of National Missions, Foreign Missions, and Christian Education offer materials on opportunities for full-time service, including teaching, social work, medicine, nursing, agriculture. One large denomination recently listed 1,200 such opportunities, each having a special appeal.

To find stories of consecrated Christians who have entered on their vocation as an assignment from God, order from your nearest Presbyterian Distribution Service center a copy of Elizabeth M. Lee's *He Wears Orchids*. These true stories of Latin Americans include such folks as a mayor, a teacher, and a merchant. The paper edition of this book costs \$1.25.

Guest speakers could be invited to bring in discussions of Christian responsibility in other lifework. There is a Christian meaning to most jobs, and such a program may well guide someone in an important choice and give a workable philosophy of vocation to all the group.

The January-March, 1951, *CROSSROADS* treats the topic of vocation on pages 9 and 80 and will add more information on this subject.

The Fourth Sunday After Easter

"Joy with the Living Christ" is a theme for a program based on great hymns and other sacred music. This may be one of the most inspirational evenings of the whole year. This is traditionally called "Cantate Sunday,"

from the first Latin word in the traditional service, meaning, "O sing . . ." The program should not be just a spontaneous song fest, but should have careful planning.

Our *Hymnal* is well supplemented by the *Handbook to the Hymnal*, which follows the hymns, number by number, giving the story of each selection, with a bit of biography of the author and the composer. A few of these stories, well presented, and followed by the singing of the hymn itself, offer a fine evening. The choir director could be invited to be present to speak on some phase of our hymnody, and guest vocalists could contribute to the program. Such an evening is not only inspirational but helps to elevate the taste for the finest.

The Fifth Sunday After Easter

This Sunday has two traditional meanings: as Rogation Sunday and as Rural Life Sunday. Rogation means supplication, and the designation comes from a time long ago when earthquake threatened and the Christians prayed, first for deliverance, and then to give thanks. A whole program may be organized around the subject of prayer, or practicing the presence of the living Christ. For help, see the book *Prayer*, by George A. Buttrick, and pages 52-55 of the October-December, 1950, issue of *CROSSROADS*.

The rural life idea might also be the basis of a program. Suggestions for such a program may be procured through the Central Department of Publication and Distribution of the National Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. (probable price, 5 cents per copy), as well as from the Presbyterian Department of Rural Church Work, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. Worship services have been prepared centering around a table filled with various fruits of the earth and with samples of earth for dedication. The discussion considers the relation of the whole Church and society to the rural areas and rural peoples. The rural theme and the prayer theme may be combined in a single evening. For further information about Rural Life Sunday, consult *CROSSROADS* for April-June, 1951, page 87.

The Sunday After Ascension Day

"The Nearness of the Living Christ." This theme lends itself more

particularly to worship than to a discussion problem. After forty days on the earth, Christ ascends into heaven. He is no longer a mere teacher or a human leader, but, in the words of the Apostles' Creed, "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." No longer bound to earth or to history, he fills all time and all space. He had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away," and now we understand why. In becoming one with God, this same Jesus is available to us all, wherever we are, whoever we are. The great indisputable fact of the resurrection is that millions in all lands and ages have actually experienced his presence and his help.

Let the program be planned in the spirit of prayer and adoration, waiting as did the first disciples for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

A call to worship and a prayer for ascension time are to be found on page 309 of *The Book of Common Worship* (1946), and many different Scripture suggestions for this season are listed in the Lectionary on pages 378, 379, 384, and 385.

Pentecost, or Whitsunday

"The Birthday of the Christian Church." This is a third peak of the Christian year; like the birth and the resurrection of Jesus, it also has its origin in the actual New Testament event.

The second chapter of the book of The Acts should be read, and the entire program built upon the theme of the Christian Church.

A well-prepared panel discussion could cover various aspects of the Church: the nature of the Church; the Church as a pattern for society; the Church as the home of fellowship; our local church and its program; the world-wide Church; the problems facing the Church today; and others.

The great hymns of the Church may be used, such as "The Church's One Foundation," "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord," and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

For resource material, the study manual, *The Church in Christian Faith and Life* (75 cents a single copy at Westminster Book Stores), and the official curriculum supplies for 1950-1951, such as the *Christian Faith and Life* lessons on the Church in *CROSSROADS*, and Norman F. Langford's *Fire Upon the Earth*, are recommended.

OUR SOCIAL PROBLEM PROGRAM:

The Use of Alcohol

Isn't it about time for your group to have a program on the use of alcoholic beverages? If we ignore this subject, we are ignoring one of the great social problems of our day.

Here is a way to handle this program:

Prepare small cards with numbers 1 and 2 written on them. As each person enters, let him choose a card out of a hat. Then instruct him to sit with his team 1 or 2, as the case may be. The chairs should be so arranged as to divide the group into two equal sections.

When the meeting is under way, let it then be announced that one of the sections (make the choice at the last minute) is to defend the view of the moderate drinker, and the other to interpret the position of our Church, which is voluntary total abstinence. Allow five minutes for the teams to prepare their arguments; then open an informal debate.

In informal debate, the chairman allows one speaker to take the floor at a time, alternating between the two sides. No individual may speak more than twice. In that way he can defend himself once in rebuttal, but others get a chance too.

The chairman will close the debate at whatever time has been previously agreed upon. One hour is recommended. Then, to clear the air, it would be helpful for someone to be

ready to interpret the official stand of the Presbyterian Church on this subject. You will find this information in the Social Pronouncements of General Assembly (see particularly the minutes of General Assembly for 1946—your pastor has them) and in the pamphlet *Alcohol and People* (35 cents), available from Presbyterian Distribution Service centers.

Another method of handling this

The Director Discusses—

“What Makes Worship Meaningful?”

THERE is an almost wistful desire on the part of adults to experience meaningful worship. It is significant that the workshop most popular among the young adults gathered for our National Young Adult Advisory Council in 1950 was the one on worship. Time and again, adults in conferences, in small groups, and in private conversation, have made known to me their deep, underlying desire to participate in meaningful group worship. Group worship is called by many Christians corporate worship. The word “corporate” comes from the Latin word *corpus*, meaning “body.” Only as a member of the body of Christ worships in spirit and in truth with the other members of that body does he come to know the full meaning of the Christian life.

This question is often asked: “Should our group (young adult, couples’ club, or class) worship at every one of our meetings?” Let me ask this question in return: “Is any distinctively Christian meeting ever really complete without worship?”

It is one of the fundamental purposes of each group in the Christian Church to help its members to recognize the claim of God upon the whole of life. A talk or discussion on this subject does help; but sometimes a single experience of worship will make more clear God’s claim on us than hours of discussion, or even months of lighthearted fellowship.

If worship is essential to the life of any Christian group (and it is!), then it should be a vital part of the group’s experience every time it

meets. Of course, the forms of worship may vary according to the circumstances, but they should be carefully planned, whether they take two, five, fifteen, or fifty minutes.

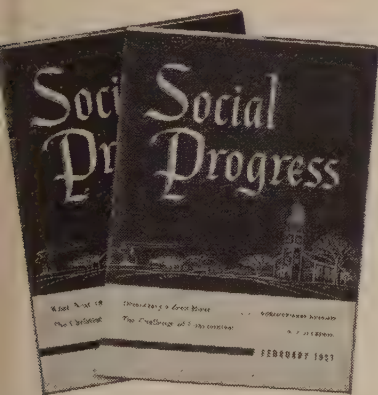
It will help to keep the meeting on the subject if all the group has read the article, “Why Some People Don’t Drink,” by John Park Lee, which appears on page 8 of this magazine. *Social Progress* will also carry resources on this subject in its April, 1952, issue.

meets. Of course, the forms of worship may vary according to the circumstances, but they should be carefully planned, whether they take two, five, fifteen, or fifty minutes.

It is with this in mind that pages on worship are included in the Program Section of *CROSSROADS* each quarter. Here your worship leaders will find a wealth of material that will keep your group from getting into the haphazard worship pattern whose opening words are, “What hymn do you want to sing?” rather than “Let us worship God.”

The Presbyterian young adults in Washington, D. C., felt this matter of group worship to be so essential that they held a workshop on the subject for leaders from local church groups. It included first a talk by the leader; then a question period, followed by suggestions from the group, and demonstrations. The leader spent the first part of the evening suggesting worship possibilities: hymn studies, picture interpretations, use of poetry, use of stories, study of Church symbols, and comparative worship experiences (that is, how other denominations worship). During the latter part of the evening, an illustration was given of guided prayer, a religious picture was interpreted, and a hymn study was used impressively to close the evening. A mimeographed bibliography of worship materials was handed to each person.

It is for precisely the same purpose that worship resources are to be found in this Program Section of *CROSSROADS*. For example, on the next page



Social Progress, a publication of the Division of Social Education and Action, Board of Christian Education, carries additional material on this subject in its April, 1952, issue.

you will find worship resources for adult groups. In a subsequent issue there will be an article on "How Can I Have Daily Devotions?"

Man has an inner need for corporate worship. Although this need for fellowship can certainly be met during the weekly hour of worship in church on Sunday morning, it is increasingly clear that there is too little realization on the part of most Christians of the vital interdependence of work, fellowship, and worship necessary to their

full commitment. Don't let your adult group neglect this vitally important habit of seeking the Holy Spirit in prayer. It is through the fellowship of a Christian group such as yours, where opinions are shared and matters are fully discussed, that deep convictions are created which form the basis of both faith and action.

Sincerely yours,
RAYMOND V. KEARNS, JR.
Director of the Department
of Adult Work

A Service for Palm Sunday

By Paul N. Elbin

The adult class or group that does not meet on Palm Sunday can still use this service. It is related to a wider period in the Lenten season, and especially to Passion Week, the week preceding Palm Sunday.

THE CALL TO WORSHIP: "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

THE INVOCATION: "Our Father, as on this day we keep the special memory of our Redeemer's entry into the city, so grant, O Lord, that now and ever he may triumph in our hearts. Let the King of grace and glory enter in, and let us lay ourselves and all we are in full and joyful homage before him; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen." (*Book of Prayers*, by H. C. G. Moule.)

THE HYMN OF PRAISE: No. 150, "Ride On! Ride On in Majesty!"

THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES: "And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming to you,

humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their clothes on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their clothes on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (*Matt. 21: 1-9*, R. S. V.)

THE WORD OF TRUTH (a reading by the leader): "We stand in awe before the Great One of the ages. His wisdom and compassion, courage and confidence evoke admiration and adoration. Yet he was born in an obscure village of a distant province of a vast empire, the son of a peasant woman. He lived among people who knew the pangs of hunger and the pinch of poverty, victims of manifold forms of injustice and tyranny. Acquainted with grief and familiar with sorrow, he absorbed in himself the agonies of his enslaved countrymen. Surrounded by angry flames of hatred and retaliation, he emerged unscarred by enmity. Deaf ears he turned to the appeal of the dagger and the sword, and to the seductive whisper of compromise he did not respond. That the end justifies the means he never believed. So he sought to usher in the reign of God on earth by living every day as a wise and affectionate son in a father's home. None of the symbols of pomp and power did he possess. Penniless and

"A Service for Palm Sunday" is reprinted from Paul N. Elbin's *Fifty Devotional Services, First Series*, by permission of Fleming H. Revell Company, the publishers.

Dr. Elbin, who is president of West Liberty State College, Wheeling, W. Va., has performed a notable service for those who lead worship in church organizations, colleges, and community groups. The fifty brief services in his book are planned completely. Calls to worship, prayers, hymn suggestions, and reproductions of notable statements or meditations are included in each. These statements have been carefully chosen, more critically perhaps than the poetry selections. Two chapters at the beginning of the book outline the purpose of worship and the leadership of worship services.

propertyless, in hours of crisis he had not where to lay his head, although the foxes had holes and the birds had nests. The insignia of public office were never bestowed upon him, nor were honorary degrees of higher learning ever attached to his name. He went about doing good, relying utterly upon kindness and forgiveness and sacrifice, although fearless in denunciation of evil in high places. When hunted as a revolutionist because popular response to his appeal threatened to undermine prevailing customs and existing institutions, he remained calm and resolute in the face of a furious storm of opposition and persecution. Even the desertion of his dearest friends did not cause him to despair. Nor was he swerved by the knowledge that his relatives thought that he was out of his mind. From the agony of Gethsemane, the mockery of a trial before high authority, the ordeal of bearing a heavy cross to Calvary, and the shameful cruelty of crucifixion, he emerged triumphant. No wonder his name is plowed into history! No wonder his disciples on countless occasions have turned the world upside down! The ideal is here incarnate in the actual. He is the way, the truth, and the life!"—*Kirby Page*.¹

¹ From *Living Triumphantly*. Published by Fleming H. Revell Company.

THE PRAYER FOR THE KINGDOM:
With reverent and hopeful hearts
we would come before thee this triumphal day, our Father. We would
an even the children of the olden
time in saying, 'Blessed is he that
cometh in the name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest.'

"We come also conscious of our
sins, our Father. We have not been
helpers of thy Kingdom as much as
we should have been. We have failed
in making thy cause our cause, thy
Kingdom our kingdom, thine interests
our interests. But we thank thee that
there is forgiveness with thee that
we mayest be feared. Show us thy
mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.
Enter not into judgment with
thy servants, for in thy sight shall no
living man be justified.

"But, O our Father, we would pray
especially on this day so prophetic
of triumph, hasten the coming of thy
Kingdom upon earth, and draw the
whole world into willing obedience
to thy blessed reign. Overcome all
the enemies of Christ, and bring low
every power that is exalted against
him. Cast out all the evil things that
cause wars and fightings among us,
and let thy Spirit rule the hearts of
men in righteousness and in love.
Establish every work that is founded
on truth and equity; let thy Kingdom
come and thy will be done on earth
as it is done in heaven, and fulfill all
the best hopes and desires of thy people.
We ask in the name of Christ, our
Saviour. Amen."—G. B. F. Hallock.

THE HYMN OF PRAISE: No. 146,
All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

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Sandy Reviews a Book and Quite Unintentionally Plans a

Spring Fling

"De gustibus non est disputandum!"

You needn't appeal to the nearest high school sophomore for his Latin lexicon. The translation is simply (and freely), "There's no use arguing about tastes." That's the way it is, we find, with the recreation of adult groups. Andy, to take one example, thinks that the best kind of fun for our gang is an active event. He organizes folk games, nature hikes, and bike trips. But there are lots of others in our crowd who'd rather take on a quiz or some mental gymnastics. I'm not saying anything uncomplimentary about Andy; mind you! He's really awfully nice. But people differ.

So when I got to look at a new book called *Gay Parties for All Occasions*,¹ and found it had a wide variety to please all tastes, I knew it would help in planning our next party. We're calling it the "Spring Fling."

The author, E. O. Harbin (he compiled *The Fun Encyclopedia* too), has included seventy-some parties in the book. And you can use them as is, or take parts from several and manufacture your own. That's what we did.

Our "Spring Fling" committee met last night and decided to open the party with an icebreaker. We found just the thing on page 268, called "Millinery." We're going to divide the folks into small groups and let them have newspapers, crepe paper, some decorations, and pins to design some spring hats. Then they can wear their "original creations," as the ads say, for the whole evening. The idea may be "old hat" to some, but it usually gets the crowd into the fun.

Then we worked out some flower games from the ideas in the book, because of "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la." One was "My Flower Garden." "One player announces: 'I have a flower garden. What are you going to give me to plant in it?' The players in turn must answer with some flower beginning with a letter of the alphabet. These must be given in alphabetical order. For instance, the first player answers

'asters,' the next, 'buttercups,' until the whole alphabet is used. If a player cannot answer, and anyone in the group, including the leader, can, he posts a forfeit, redeemed by performing some stunt for the crowd." We think that game will work out well.

That will open up the flower interest enough to try a game that will delight the heart of any punster (and our group has its generous share). It's "Scouting for Flowers," and this is the procedure. We will do as Mr. Harbin directs when he writes: "Make a card set, . . . or use articles and pictures from magazines and catalogues. Number exhibits and place about the room for guests to identify with the correct numbers of the flowers represented, or . . . have players call the answers either in individual competition or by teams. Some suggestions: Bachelor's-button (a button off a man's shirt or trousers). Bluebonnet (a blue bonnet). Buttercup (picture of some butter and a cup). Carnation (a toy automobile or pictures and a map of the United States). Chrysanthemum (a small Santa Claus figure, a copy of an anthem, a jar of Mum.) Cowslip (picture of a cow and a petticoat). Dandelion (picture of a stylishly dressed man and a lion). Daisy (page from a calendar and the letter Z). Dogwood (toy dog and a piece of wood). Flag (an American flag). Four-o'clock (clock set at four o'clock). Foxglove (picture of a fox and a glove). Hollyhock (sprig of holly or picture; picture of hawk, or the familiar pawnbroker's three-balls sign). Indian paintbrush (picture of an Indian and an artist's brush). Iris (picture of a rainbow). Larkspur (picture of a lark and a spur). Orchid (picture of baby labeled 'ours'). Pansy (a pan and the letter Z). Phlox (pictures of two or more flocks of sheep or birds). Poppy (bottle of pop and a pea). Pink (piece of pink cloth or paper). Snapdragon (a snapshot and a picture of a dragon). Sunflower (picture of the sun and a bit of flour). Sweet William (a bit of sugar, the printed form used

¹ By E. O. Harbin. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. 351 pages. \$2.95. Quotations used by permission.

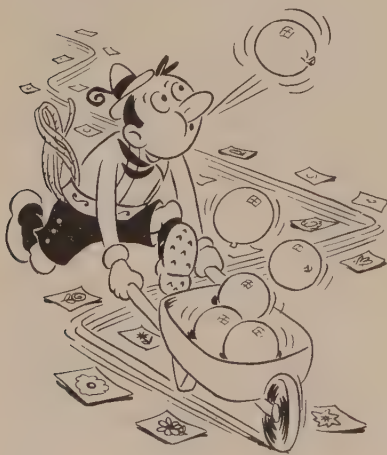
for making a will, and a yam). Violet (picture of a viol and a sign 'For Rent')."

Won't that make a holiday for the pun lovers? We're going to add some other flowers, and they will be just as corny. You can play it with animals too. And someday later on we will. How silly can an adult group get, anyway?

Our gardening stunt should please Andy. We got the idea from page 186. We'll fill a child's wheelbarrow with toy balloons for one prop. And then cut out pictures of flowers and vegetables from the seed catalogues, putting these on the floor, about ten inches apart. Our teams will use this as a relay. The object is to steer the wheelbarrow swiftly through the garden path without running over a plant or losing a balloon. The careless ones are going to make up our dishwashing committee!

The brains will be interested in the "Bird Hunt." It requires us to know our fine-feathered friends. According to *Gay Parties*, "any number can enjoy this pastime. Mount colored pictures of birds on stiff cards five by four inches. Such pictures can be had inexpensively from the National Audubon Society, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N. Y. Write the names of the birds on the backs of the cards.

"Start the game by telling a story of a hike through the woods and fields where various kinds of birds are seen. Hold up the cards one at a time while the players try to identify the birds. The first player to call the correct name is handed the card. At the close, the player or side with the largest number of cards wins. If no one answers, tell the group what bird it is, put it back in the stack of cards, and hold it up again later.



"The game can be varied by numbering the cards. Place them about the room and have the players identify them by writing the names and numbers on paper. Read the correct list to check papers."

When we come to our summer fun nights, we expect to get outdoors.

Andy is to plan that hike. So it's blue jeans and old shoes for us! He said he has ideas already, some of them from this book's 25-page section on "Summer Parties."

Have fun! It can't hurt the fellowship.

Yours,
Sandy

Now Is the Time to Make Summer Plans with Your Family

VACATION leisure can be used in any one of many valuable ways. Enjoyment and adventure await the person who carefully plans his summer. A church member often has open to him opportunities of special interest. (Read below of trips to Alaska, Guatemala, and South America.) Listed among the items in this handy guide is enough variety for everyone.

Families on Tour

If you want to do something that's fun and that will bring back rich memories through the years, take vacation trips together as a family.

In a *New York Times* article entitled "Travel with a Child Can Be Fun," Dorothy Carew told of a twelve-thousand-mile trip across the United States with her seven-year-old daughter. She says children are better travelers than they are generally thought to be. They adapt easily to situations and people; they take all kinds of experiences in stride; and they learn more than you would ever think possible. Sections of the country through which they travel become real and are remembered because of certain experiences there. History comes alive as the family becomes in their imagination part of a covered-wagon train on the Santa Fe Trail or members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Mrs. Carew gives practical advice: Take along a vacuum bottle for cold water or fruit juice to eliminate too frequent stops, and soft-soled slippers for little feet that "get tired of shoes." Paper, crayons, a skipping rope, ball, doll, etc., can be packed in a shoe bag and hung over the back of the front seat to furnish entertainment en route. A pillow and blanket for rest are also essential.

Or, you don't have to "tour" very far. In her little book, *Our Family Grows Toward God*, Mary Clemens Odell has a valuable chapter on vacations. She tells how their family of three children, with very little money, went camping one summer at a site not far from home. Planning, packing, and driving off like a band of gypsies, they located a site, staked their tents, and cooked over an open fire. At night they slept under the stars, hiked by day, and worshiped God in the beauty of his out of doors. It all added up to a happy and long-to-be-remembered vacation.

Mexico, Guatemala, South America

For adults who want unforgettable experiences in colorful Latin-American countries, there is no better way to go than on one of our Presbyterian Foreign Missions Seminars. You see all that tourists see, plus what your



For the Church Worker

Do you know that the Presbyterian Church conducts seven regional, two-week summer leadership schools each year? One is in the East, one in the South, two in the Midwest, one in the Southwest, and two are located on the Pacific Coast. In these schools are classes, workshops, seminars on Bible study, missionary education, social education and action, crafts, administration, audio-visuals, etc. In each are laboratory schools for teachers with children, youth, and adults, which provide study and practice teaching. In many there is a Church music section. In each is a section on women's work. Study, discussion, worship, fellowship with persons of like purpose—these are some of the valuable features of the leadership schools. They offer a fine leadership training opportunity for new leaders and a "refresher course" for old-timers. The rates are nominal, and your local church is usually glad to help underwrite some of the expense. Talk with your pastor, or write to the Department of Leadership Education, 1105 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa., for information on the school nearest your geographical preference.

Church is doing. You come back a better world citizen, with a more intelligent understanding of what the situation is in many of the countries that are included for Point Four help. And you return with a new appreciation of what the missionary program means to world brotherhood. In the summer of 1951 there were two seminars: one to South America, and one to Mexico and Guatemala. Write immediately for information on the 1952 seminars: The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Alaska and the United States

The Presbyterian Board of National Missions sponsors similar seminars to Alaska, the West Indies, the Southwest area—Arizona and New Mexico, and also to the Southeast area of the United States. (Write to Dr. Merlyn Chappel, Board of National Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., for information about National Missions seminars.)

Planned for the summer of 1952 is a trip to Alaska. Last year's group left from Seattle by plane. The trip is divided into three stages: Southwestern Alaska, the interior, and the Arctic Coast. You could take one or two or all of the sections.

Whether or not a seminar has been planned for the part of the country you want to visit, you can always drop in on our mission work along your

way. Get from your pastor or the Women's Association of your church a copy of the *Year Book of Prayer for Missions*. In it you will discover mission centers scattered all over the United States, from the Maine woods to Southern California.

Wherever you go you will find churches. They are large and small, old and historic or new and modern, conventional and unconventional. You will find them in the slums of big cities, and in rural parishes co-operating in a new type of parish program. Stop to look around. Talk with someone nearby. Get new ideas on program, church architecture, equipment, and arrangements of educational plants. If you are traveling during the school season, remember that there are 44 Presbyterian Church-related colleges, one academy, and 9 seminaries, as well as 117 Westminster Foundation centers in many of the state universities and colleges. Your pastor will know where these are.

If you are in New York City, be sure to call at 156 Fifth Avenue to see the headquarters of the Boards of Foreign and National Missions, the General Council, and the National Council of Presbyterian Men. And in Philadelphia, include the old Witherspoon Building on a visit. There are housed the offices of the highest court of our Church—the General Assembly. There, also, are the Historical Society, the Board of Pensions, and the Board of Christian Education, where your Presbyterian curriculum and program materials are planned.

Recreation Workshops

If you are interested in crafts, weaving, metal work, wood carving, music, drama, folk games, puppets, nature lore, family fun, or group recreation, sign up for a recreation workshop. These workshops are part of a spontaneous movement spreading all over the country. Some years ago a recreation workshop was initiated at Camp Idhuhapi, near Minneapolis, Minn. The movement had hard going at first, but now it turns many away. Some of those who have been unable to gain admittance have returned home to set up workshops in their own areas. In the spring and summer of 1951 there were thirty-eight recreation leadership courses held throughout the nation. For information about any in your particular area, write to your State College Extension Service or to your Presbyterian Christian Education Field Director. By subscribing to

(Continued on page 95)

For Church Officers

ELDER, DEACON, TRUSTEE

The Church Officer and His Job in Missionary Education

By Henry H. Bucher

You are an officer in your local church. You have been chosen by the people of your church to lead them. You believe in the world Christian mission. You believe the Church is truly Christ's Church only when it radiates this sense of mission. You want your own church to be an effective agency in this world-wide enterprise. You are conscious that the obligation to make your own church the effective missionary agent it should be rests squarely upon your own shoulders as a church officer; it is your job. And you know that the church has to be educated to do this job through missionary education. But do you know how to impart this conviction to others, how to go about doing the job, what tools to use in doing it, or how to measure success or failure?

This article is written to help answer these questions—that is, to help church officers see their own job in relation to the missionary task of the church. It is a condensation of the manual, *Your Church in the World Neighborhood*, prepared and published by the Department of Missionary Education of the Board of Christian Education, as a study and resource guide for missionary education committees and chairmen in local churches. The Department of Adult Work is employing this manual as its training guide in missionary education for elders, deacons, and trustees. All church officers should purchase this manual and become familiar with it. It may be secured for 25 cents from your nearest Presbyterian Distribution Service center.

PRESBYTERIANS have always been sensitive to the missionary obligation resting upon them. Long before the corporate Church was ready for the Church-wide assumption of that responsibility, individuals, societies, presbyteries, and synods were actively engaged in missionary enterprises of many kinds. On June 7, 1837, the General Assembly voted to assume responsibility for the extension and direction of the missionary program of the Presbyterian Church. The 1847 General Assembly ruled on the subject in these words, which are still binding upon us:

"The Presbyterian Church is a missionary society, the object of which is to aid in the conversion of the world, and every member of this Church is a member for life of said society and bound to do all in his power for the accomplishment of this object."

It is now more than one hundred years since that statement put us on

record as "a missionary church." During those years our missionary enterprise has grown until we now have four thousand missionaries at work in the homeland and in thirty countries abroad!

As great as this accomplishment has been, we cannot begin to feel satisfied with it. We dare not be content until every congregation is a missionary-minded church. To accomplish this there must be in every church a thoroughgoing program of missionary education.

But what is missionary education? Two experts in the field tell us:

"Missionary education is the sum total of all our efforts to cultivate in children, young people, and adults, a concern for making Christ known to all men, a Christian attitude toward men of other races, nations, and classes, an intimate knowledge of the extension of the Christian fellowship at home and abroad, and a hearty partici-

pation in enlarging this fellowship until it covers the earth."¹

Missionary education, therefore has three goals: to create understanding both of the missionary nature of Christianity and of the missionary enterprise itself; to develop appreciation of people at home and abroad, in Africa or in our own neighborhood and to assume responsibility in the world Christian community.

Every Church Officer a Missionary

Since the Christian gospel is missionary-centered and since missionary education cannot be divorced from the total Christian education program of the Church, it is the general responsibility of church officers to see that certain things are done. The full gospel message in its world-wide implications must be proclaimed from the pulpit, every department of the church school, and all the organizations within the church. The missionary character of our faith and the missionary work of our Church must be made explicit through special study emphases and promotional procedures throughout the year. The history of Christian outreach, the present status of the missionary enterprise, and the current opportunities for individual and group participation in that enterprise, must be kept before the people in terms adapted to their understanding.

This can be done effectively in a number of ways, but four stand out as the chief avenues of missionary education in the local church. No one

MR. BUCHER is Associate Director of the Department of Missionary Education, Board of Christian Education.

¹ From *Missionary Education in Your Church*, by Nevin Harner and David D. Baker.

the four will work successfully with-
out the support and leadership of
church officers.

1. Study. Hearing a missionary
talk is good, but it can never be a
substitute for the planned study that
your church may carry on under the
direction of the church officers. A
series of Church Family Nights, to
which the entire congregation comes
together to consider the designated
study theme, is one of the best ways
to operate this program. Under this
plan, the alternate annual theme is
studied in the individual organizations
within the church: the women's cir-
cles, men's book clubs or chapters
of N.C.P.M., couples' clubs, youth
groups, and so forth. Your Boards
and agencies provide abundant help
and materials to make this study a
worth-while and adventurous experi-
ence. And you will want to follow this
study with action. (Refer to pages 8
and 9 of *Your Church in the World
Neighborhood* for details on Church
Family Nights and the organizational
use of the alternate theme.)

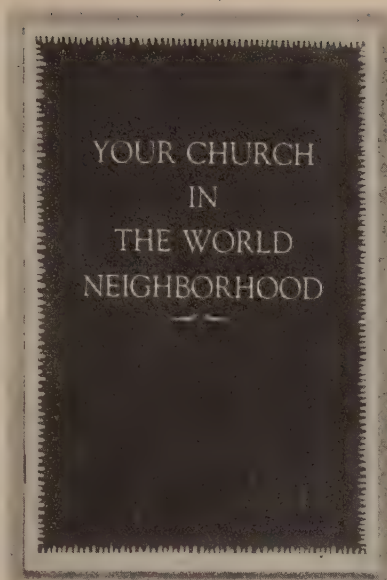
2. Worship. This is vital. Every
week worship service is an impulse to
the outreach of God's love. And if the
worship center can be planned to sym-
bolize the world that Christ died to
save, the hearts of the worshipers will
be inclined to widen to receive it.

3. Fellowship. It is an exciting
experience to have contact with people
from other places or of other races.
Hearing and meeting a missionary
from some far-away field, or studying
the missionary education study themes
for the year, a congregation may find
incentive to draw closer to the stranger
in the community—the Japanese, Chi-
nese, Filipino, Syrian, Central Euro-
pean immigrant, Negro, D. P.—and
reach a new understanding that
will count heavily in terms of inter-
national peace and good will.

4. Service. "Look here, you talk a
lot but you never *do* anything about
it!" This is a characteristic reaction
to study programs in the church that
have no carry-through in action. The
Chinese Communist taunt is, "Chris-
tians talk about love but they don't
practice it." A worth-while program
in missionary education must bear
concrete fruit in some form of unself-
ish service, both in one's own commu-
nity and far afield.

Organizing for Action

The Pastor. A missionary-minded
pastor usually means a missionary-



minded church. The pastor is the key
figure in the fully successful mission-
ary education program of any church.
If he is fully convinced and enthusi-
astic, he can "sell" missions to his
session and to the congregation. How-
ever, the missionary education pro-
gram in any church must not depend
solely upon any one person, be he pas-
tor or layman. It is the responsibility
of the whole church, through its
elected officers, and should be handled
by a representative committee espe-
cially selected and consecrated to this
task.

The Committee Plan. For the
set-up of this local church missionary
education committee, there are no
hard-and-fast rules. There is a wide
variety of practice within a framework
of commonly accepted principles.
Whatever the pattern employed, ex-
perience has shown that several fac-
tors are essential to success:

1. The committee should be respon-
sible to the session.
2. There should be at least one
elder on the committee, and nor-
mally he should serve as chair-
man.
3. The committee should be made
up of representatives from each
organization or age group within
the church.
4. It should meet regularly to plan
the church's missionary educa-
tion calendar and to see it
through.
5. It should report to the session on
its plans and activities through
its member who is an elder.

Planning. Whatever organizational
plan you employ, *the important thing*

is to plan! The commonest cause of
unimaginative programs and lagging
interest is failure to plan well—and
early. Make plans each May or June
for the succeeding fall, winter, and
spring months.

Plan a detailed program for the
whole year. Set yourself definite
yearly goals. Then after the program
has been going on for a while, review
what you have done and report to the
session at stated intervals. The man-
ual, *Your Church in the World Neigh-
borhood*, gives detailed suggestions on
how to plan your program, the current
mission-study themes, and the mate-
rials available for the study of these
themes. Write to the Department of
Missionary Education, 731 Withers-
poon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa.,
for added guidance in planning.

Trained Leadership

A good missionary education com-
mittee needs trained leadership. Zeal,
devotion, eagerness to serve, or the
fact that the committee has church
officers on it—these factors alone can-
not guarantee success. Special train-
ing is necessary too.

Community and local church leader-
ship training schools, summer confer-
ences and junior high camps, summer
training schools for adults conducted
by the Board of Christian Education,
and interdenominational schools, such
as those at Silver Bay, Northfield,
Lake Forest, Boulder, and Asilomar
—all of these give general mission-
ary orientation and opportunities for
study and training to a church officer
who wants to help make the mission-
ary enterprise come alive in his own
church. The missionary education
committee may send some of its of-
ficers and potential leaders to one of
such training institutes and then, when
they return, give them free rein and
ample facilities to put their new ideas
into practice.

Avenues of Approach

There are many opportunities for
missionary education in your church.
Here are a few places and ways to
carry out this program:

Stated Worship Services. The
sermon is the minister's great oppor-
tunity for missionary instruction.
Missionary sermons, exchange of pul-
pits with ministers of other races, the
use of missionary speakers, missionary
hymns and litanies, and prayers for
missionaries (using the *Year Book
of Prayer for Missions*), excerpts

from the letters of missionaries on the field, the use of illustrations that call attention to movements for brotherhood, good will, and world order—through all these and other means the minister may lead his congregation to think in world terms and be a missionary church.

He may also occasionally use Sunday nights and midweek meetings for special missionary emphases, such as a series of missionary Bible studies, pulpit reviews of missionary books, ten-minute news reports from the field, addresses by mission people, reports of local people who have returned from visits to National or Foreign Missions areas, or any other device that will help to stimulate interest and concern in the World Church.

How does this affect the church officer? A pastor may very easily get so bogged down in administrative problems that he unconsciously fails to put enough missions into his total church program. The church officer may tactfully point this out, and the minister will be grateful for it.

Special Periods of Church-wide Missionary Emphasis. One of the most successful ways to give missions particular emphasis is through a series of—

Church Family Nights. This is an important part of the new plan for missionary education recommended to the Church by the 162d General Assembly at its Cincinnati meeting in May, 1950. Each church officer should be familiar with this plan.

Specifically, this plan brings the whole church together as a church family in what is called a series of "Church Family Nights on Christian Outreach." The Church Family Nights are held on a number of successive Sunday or week nights, with the entire church family—adults, youth, children—in attendance. They meet first for fellowship at a simple dinner; then they divide into age groups to study the designated theme for these Church Family Night occasions, using texts and materials provided both denominationally and interdenominationally. The best time for this series is January through March, though they are being conducted successfully in some churches in the fall and early spring. The recommended theme for these occasions alternates from year to year between the foreign and the national themes, so that one year the foreign theme is



OFFICERS OF THE 1951 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dr. Harrison Ray Anderson, Moderator of the 1951 General Assembly of our Church, will preside at the opening of the 1952 Assembly when it meets in New York City this May. His successor will be elected early in the Assembly. Pictured with him is the Vice-Moderator, Dr. Elmer G. Homrighausen (left), professor of Christian education at Princeton Theological Seminary.

studied on the church family level and the following year the national theme.

This does not mean that the theme not studied in the Family Nights is neglected. This theme is the one that is emphasized through all the separate organizations within the church.

Let us take an example. In 1952-1953 the foreign theme will be "Africa." This is especially recommended for study in Church Family Nights next year. Therefore, the national theme, "Home Missions and Human Rights," could be studied in the church organization. (The mission-study year begins in September.)

Another place to study missions is in the meetings of the various church organizations. These include:

1. Men's Organizations. Presbyterian men are more and more assuming their role of leadership in the missionary endeavor of our Church. Try a Men's Book Club. (Write to the Department of Missionary Education for a copy of the leaflet *Men Are Reading Missionary Books* and for help in organizing a club.) Have a din-

ner meeting with a speaker on missions or some phase of world affairs; have an open forum on the missionary theme for organizations; take on the support of a definite mission project of some sort.

2. Young Adult Groups and Couples' Clubs. Here missionary education may come in worship services, in parties emphasizing world friendship, in reading programs, and in many other kinds of planned activities. The program section of *CROSSROADS* carries frequent suggestions along this line.

3. Women's Organizations. In addition to all the above-mentioned methods, the women have programs and worship services of missionary interest provided by the three Boards. They have also had years of experience in enthusiastic leadership in missionary study and programming. All other church officers could learn much from them as they strive for teamwork and a co-ordinated missionary education program.

4. Youth Groups. The missionary

education program among young people of all ages comes under the leadership of the Christian Outreach Commission of Westminster Fellowship. Primary resource materials are the *Youth Fellowship Kit*, the *Junior-High Kit*, the Friendship Press graded readers, books, and the Friendship Frontiers plan. Church officers entrusted with responsibility in these areas may write to the Department of Young People's Work, 1105 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa., for further guidance.

5. Children's Groups. Children are the most responsive of all people to an imaginative missionary education program. Plenty of good material for children is available on both of the annual study themes. Children should have their own age group part in the Church Family Nights and should use the alternate theme at church school or in their organizations.

6. The Church School. The church school is a natural place for missionary education. The subject occurs constantly in the *Christian Faith and Life* lessons, and each teacher-parent magazine has regular articles about missions and about ways to teach it in home and church. *Your Church in the World Neighborhood* also goes into great detail on missionary education through the church school. Church officers should study this section of the manual with special care.

7. Study in Vacation Church Schools. Vacation church school teachers have an excellent opportunity to make a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of children. It is easy to see the matchless opportunities for creative missionary education at this level. There are splendid courses available in the graded interdenominational books and teachers' guides. Each year the course that has not already been used with boys and girls in church-wide study (either foreign or national) should be the missionary-education curriculum material for the vacation church school.

Conclusion

The church officer who truly cares about the world mission of his church both serves and gives; thus he participates both directly and indirectly. He serves both directly and indirectly. He participates by helping to meet community needs. He visits as many nearby mission stations as he can; he studies about those too far away to visit

and helps share with others the knowledge gained in a variety of missionary education programs. He reads missionary books; he sees missionary films and exhibits; he listens to missionary education programs on the radio; he engages in recreation and fellowship that further missionary interest and understanding. He reads the manual *Your Church in the World Neighborhood* and applies it in his own church.

He alone can answer the \$64 question, "When will there be enough missionary education in my church?" He answers it by what he does about it in his own church. Then every Presbyterian church will have become a missionary church, and in so doing it will have fulfilled the purpose for which it was founded.

Now Is the Time to Make Summer Plans with Your Family

(Continued from page 91)

the quarterly paper *Leisure* (Box 871, Nashville, Tenn.; 25 cents), you can keep up on recreation ideas and events.

Camps and Conferences

Family camps are fun and an inexpensive way to spend a vacation. Programs are leisurely and geared to the interests of the whole family. These are set up locally, sometimes by a local church, more often by the presbytery or synod. To them you take the entire family. Ask your pastor for information.

Young adult conferences, especially the week-long kind, are held in a vacation spot to serve a double purpose. In the mornings workshops and discussion groups are scheduled on subjects of interest to young adults. In the afternoons the delegate is free to rest or enjoy whatever recreation the location provides. In the evenings there are vespers, fellowship activities, and finally—sleep. Your pastor or Field Director will know what is available for your area. If there is nothing planned, perhaps you can help get something started. Often there are other young adults who are looking for opportunities for a wholesome and inexpensive vacation.

Camps for oldsters. Not many, but a few, presbyteries are pioneering in the field of camping for older adults.

See your Field Director or pastor for information.

Missionary education conferences. There are five interdenominational missionary education conferences to which many adults go as part of their vacations. Take your choice of these regions: Asilomar, Pacific Grove, California; Lake Forest, Illinois; Boulder, Colorado; Northfield, Massachusetts; and Silver Bay, on Lake George, in New York. Each conference has a local office, but general information may be secured from the Joint Commission on Missionary Education, National Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Religious Drama

One of the most famous enterprises for religious drama is the Religious Drama Workshop, sponsored by the National Council of Churches. It is held in August in the Abbey Area of the beautiful American Baptist Assembly grounds, Green Lake, Wisconsin. Students enjoy classes in choral speech, production techniques, play direction, creative drama with children, pageantry, play writing, etc. Requests for information should be addressed to Miss Amy Goodhue Loomis, Director, Religious Drama Workshop, Segwun Hill, Route # 2, Lowell, Michigan.

Kirkridge Retreats

Kirkridge is experimenting on the frontier of religious retreats for Protestants. These occasions are not merely conferences but serious attempts to nurture the life of the spirit in a setting of quiet and worshipful search. Here is an opportunity for spiritual refreshment as well as a training opportunity for leaders who want to introduce some of these techniques into local church or presbytery groups. The season opens in March and continues into October, retreats lasting from one day to a week. Kirkridge is in the Pocono Mountain area of northeastern Pennsylvania. For information, write to Joseph E. Platt, Resident Secretary, Kirkridge, Bangor, Pa.

Other retreat centers are springing up across the country. For their addresses, write to the Department of Adult Work, 1105 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Over the Crossroads Desk

OVER the CROSSROADS desk there have come recently several letters about the pictures we use in this magazine. The subject has also come up in some of our conferences with men who are journalists in the secular field, conferences that we hold periodically in order to receive their suggestions for the improvement of our magazine.

Picture selection is one of the knottiest problems we have. There are many angles to it, and we can't go into all of them here. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the problem is how to illustrate intangible ideas; the lessons on Romans in this issue are a good example of that difficulty.

Following the suggestions of our consultants, we are going to use more captions under the pictures. In that way we hope to convey the reason why a particular picture was chosen for a particular page.

* * * * *

Another aspect of the problem is the matter of subjective judgment. I see in a picture something meaningful and rich, but someone else will not see what I see and may, in fact, see something objectionable.

A case in point is the cover picture on this issue. Since Holy Week and Easter occur in this quarter, I was looking for an illustration appropriate to this season. Mrs. Elsie Costello, our invaluable art editor, produced the photograph of a wood carving showing Christ Before Pilate. Our Lord is depicted as an abject prisoner, receiving his sentence, head bowed, hands tied. I was immediately attracted to it and showed it to Hamlin G. Tobey, Associate Editor of our curriculum, who makes a hobby of collecting art reproductions. His first reaction was: "It's a good picture, but it isn't the idea I have of Christ before Pilate. He was not a guilty prisoner. He was superior to his judge; he was judging Pilate. Munkácsy's painting is more to my liking."

This view of the matter is, of course, correct. But there is something to be said for the guilty-prisoner interpretation. Before Pilate and on Calvary, Christ was bearing guilt—our



By courtesy of E. S. Herrmann, New York

Detail of CHRIST BEFORE PILATE, by Munkácsy

Compare this interpretation of the trial of Jesus with the wood carving on the cover. Which do you prefer?

guilt. The picture of the prisoner receiving his sentence in degradation and humiliation may serve to stab our consciences and make us realize how low the Son of God was sent by our sins and how low he was willing to go for the sake of our salvation. In this picture our Lord is depicted as "despised and rejected of men"; in the Munkácsy painting he is acknowledging his rightful title of king while he proclaims, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18: 36). Both interpretations are valid; both are Scriptural.

I decided to use the picture of the guilty prisoner on the cover but to reprint the detail from the Munkácsy painting on this page, in order that both aspects of the trial scene might be illustrated this quarter.

* * * * *

Munkácsy's painting, *Christ Before*

CROSSROADS

Pilate, is owned by the John Wanamaker department store in Philadelphia. Each year during the Lenten season this painting hangs at one end of the great court in the store, and at the other is the equally forceful *Christ on Calvary*, by the same artist.

Incidentally, the only time these pictures were displayed out of season as far as I can remember, was during the national political conventions of the Republican and Democratic Parties, which were held in Philadelphia in the summer of 1948. It was a forceful reminder, to those who had eyes to see, that Christ the King stands in judgment upon all rulers, in whatever period of history they reign.

George L. Hunt

Editor, CROSSROADS

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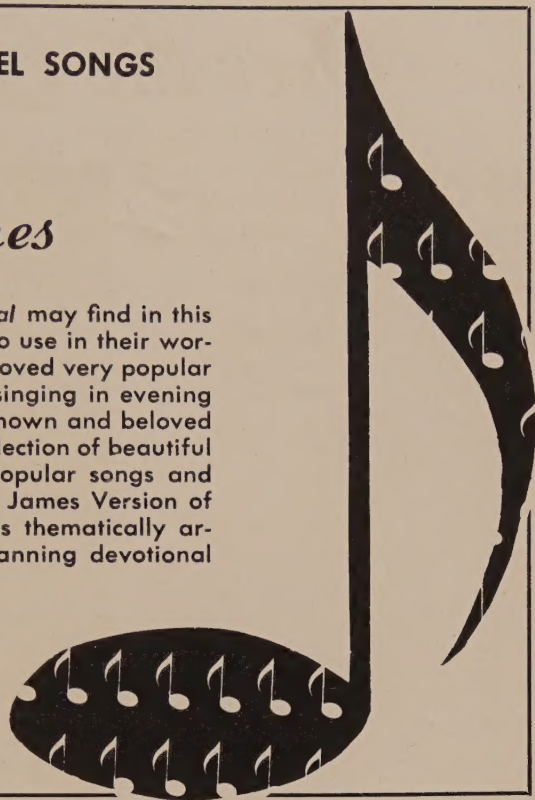
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